

**Divorce Education: An Alternative
Approach to Meeting the
Needs of Parents and Children**

A Thesis

Submitted to the College of
Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Continuing Education
in the College of Education
and Extension Division
Educational Foundations
University of Saskatchewan

By

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study was written with the intent to inform educators of the impact that divorce may have on children, of possible factors contributing to the resiliency in children of divorce, and of possible intervention efforts on the part of educators. An extensive literature review presented various perspectives from researchers, authors, and theorists. Developmental theorists such as Erickson were paralleled with empirical evidence collected by researchers such as Wallerstein. Studies including a meta-analysis by Amato (2001) were presented in discussions of the possible outcomes for children of divorce. Long-term outcomes were considered from the perspective of a sociologist and a journalist. Positive parenting skills were offered by experts such as Brooks (2005). A qualitative study of the reflective experiences of adult children of divorced parents was also initiated to determine the accuracy of the literature review and to encourage further research in this area. This thesis involved a self-administered survey of eleven adult children of divorce, while analysis of the survey data utilized a modified form of Grounded Theory.

Findings from the survey and the literature review demonstrated the need for relevant educational programs and professional development of educators. It also revealed that programming for parents should include significant elements of motivational and transfer-of-learning techniques, and that programs promoting positive reflective thought are needed for adults emerging from childhood divorce experiences.

The descriptions of emotions and behaviours disclosed by the participants of the survey were compelling and direct, offering convincing insight into the impact of parental divorce. Participants indicated that parents, and other significant individuals, did

not understand what they were feeling. Most participants could recall individuals or groups that did intervene positively in their lives; one mention was made of teacher concern about possible depression. The participants offered insight into positive and negative parental behaviours, and their reflective discussions suggested that one significant outcome of parental divorce was the impact it had on the parent/child relationship, as well as the suggestion that a difficult transition into adult relationships was often a result of this experience. Although significant research has been accomplished on the short-term impact on child development, investigation into the long-term outcomes of parental divorce has received minimal attention, possibly making it difficult for educators to have concrete data to draw upon.

The research strongly suggested that there may be a population of individuals that could benefit from educational programs that focus upon their experience as children of divorce. It is my conclusion that an appropriate educational context of constructive reflection and support can contribute positively to the well-being and quality of life for children of divorce.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Angie Wong and Dr. Diane Janes for coordinating their efforts to see me through to the completion of this graduate program. I have appreciated their work as my thesis supervisors. Despite the miles between us, we accomplished the task. Thank you as well to Dr. Reg Wickett and Dr. Michael Collins for their contributions, and to my external examiner.

I would also thank Dr. Scott McLean, who was instrumental in facilitating the online courses. Thank you to Stephanie Kehrig for her assistance with a first-year scholarship, and to Lori Heigh, Kyle Thulien, Hedi Ratzlaff and Victor Ratzlaff for their editorial help. My grateful appreciation is also extended to the participants of my study.

And a big thanks to my husband and family. (Even my grandkids learned to be patient with me.)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Permission.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Tables.....	viii

Chapter 1: Introduction

Significance.....	1
Educational Challenge.....	2
Purpose, Objectives, and Research Questions	3
Introduction to the Researcher.....	4
Theoretical Framework.....	5
Summary of Research Methodology.....	6
Parameters and Limitations.....	7
Summary	9

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Divorce Trends.....	10
Emotional and Behavioural Outcomes: Developmental Theories.....	12
Infancy and Preschool.....	14
Middle Childhood.....	16
Adolescence.....	19
Social and Economic Outcomes: Social-Psychology Theories.....	21
Economic Hardships.....	21
Mobility Following Separation.....	22
Compromise of Education and Opportunity.....	23
Family Relationship Outcomes.....	25
The Importance of Maintaining Good Relationships.....	26
Various Features of the Parent-Child Relationships.....	27
Long-term Outcomes.....	33
Two Interpretations of Long-term Outcomes.....	33
Research Related to Long-term Outcomes.....	37
Resilience.....	40
Individual Difference as a Resilience Factor.....	41
Family and Social Support as a Resilience Factor.....	41
Additional Research on Stress and Resilience Factors.....	43
Resilience: Parental Behaviours.....	45
Communication about Divorce and Separation Impact.....	45
Parental Conflict.....	48
Parental Well-being and Relationship between Parents.....	50

Intervention: Parenting Skills and Grand-Parenting.....	51
Constructive Parenting Styles.....	52
Grand-Parenting Interventions.....	56
Intervention: Educational Resources.....	59
A Sample Parenting Program.....	60
 Chapter 3: Methodology	
Study design.....	65
Development of the Questionnaire.....	65
Process of Sample Selection and Recruitment.....	66
Methodology of Data Analysis.....	69
 Chapter 4: Data Collection and Analysis	
Demographics of Study Participants.....	75
Categories, Incidents, and Findings Statements.....	78
Immediate Emotions and Thoughts.....	79
Age at Separation, and Emotions and Thoughts.....	79
Parental Preparation, and Emotions and Thoughts.....	80
Emotional and Behavioural Evolution.....	81
Individual Compensation Efforts.....	84
Intervention Positives and Negatives.....	85
Parent/Child Relationship and Divorce Responsibility.....	90
Resident Parent and Parent/Child Relationship.....	95
Parental Behaviours Negative in Nature.....	96
Beneficial Parental Behaviours.....	97
Past Relationships and Desired Relationships.....	97
Advice from Participants.....	100
 Chapter 5: Research Discussion and Conclusion	
Overview of Intentions.....	103
Overview of Findings from Survey and Literature Review.....	104
Emotional and Behavioural Outcomes.....	104
Social and Economic Outcomes.....	107
Long-term Outcomes.....	108
Resilience, Parental Behaviour, and Interventions.....	110
Outcomes for Family Relations.....	112
The Benefits of Findings to Educational Efforts.....	114
Research Suggestions.....	117
Concluding Thoughts.....	120
 References.....	121

Appendix A	
Survey Questionnaire.....	135
Appendix B	
Consent Form.....	149
Appendix C	
Recruitment Advertisements.....	141

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	
Number of Canadian Divorces in Select Years.....	11
Table 2	
Age of Survey Participants.....	75
Table 3	
Gender of Participants.....	75
Table 4	
Highest Education Obtained by Participants.....	76
Table 5	
Present Occupation of Participants.....	76
Table 6	
Age of Participants at Time of Parental Separation.....	77

Divorce Education: An Alternative Approach to Meeting the Needs of Parents and Children

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Significance

This thesis introduces research from various disciplines which have investigated aspects of divorce outcomes. It also presents original research on the personal experience of parental divorce. Although social scientists, researchers, authors, and journalists have viewed divorce from a variety of perspectives, the same conclusion has been drawn- “divorce is now part of everyday American life” (Whitehead, 1996, p. 3). Some authors have expressed concern over the dismal state of contemporary marriage (Amato & Booth, 2001), while others have normalized the fact stating that “divorce (has) reached the status of a normative event” (Carter & McGoldrick, 1999, p. 373). Whitehead has suggested that divorce is the result of a process of changing ideas and obligations in society (1996), while Carter and McGoldrick have seen it as a variation in the family life cycle (1999).

Divorce has also become common in the lives of children. Wolchik, Sandler, et al. (2002) have estimated that in the United States, parental divorce may be experienced by 1.5 million children each year. Having experienced parental divorce and gathered personal information from other children of divorce, journalist Stephanie Staal (2000) states, “For my generation, divorce has taken on the social proportions of a Great Depression, a World War II , or a Vietnam in influencing our lives” (p.2). The outcomes of parental divorce demand attention.

The argument is made that educators have traditionally designated issues of emotional well-being to disciplines such as family therapy. In the past educators may not have seen themselves as a vital source of intervention that can positively affect the outcomes of parental divorce. Educators should be given the opportunity to become informed of the outcomes of parental divorce so that they may be motivated to produce programs that address those outcomes. This thesis has brought together research from various branches of learning and investigations from various perspectives for the benefit of educators.

Educational Challenge

A challenge is extended to educators to draw upon this collection of information as inspiration for the development of structured educational programs that may be accessed by adults seeking a learning experience that is formal yet focused upon personal improvement. This thesis places three assumptions upon education:

- Educators have an interest in continuing/lifelong education that extends beyond academic confines to address the well-being of individuals.
- Education can promote introspection and eventual changes in behaviour and emotional well-being.
- Education can be effective as an alternative to personal and family counselling.

Some programs have been developed with the intent of educating parents about the possible impact that their divorce may have on their children, offering advice on parenting (Haine, Sandler, Wolchik, Tein, & Dawson-McClure, 2003). Other programs have been produced for children in an attempt to attend to their emotional well-being (O'Connor, 2004).

A synthesis of knowledge, based on research and personal experience, is needed so that educators may evaluate existing programs and successfully build new programs which are relevant and meaningful, and so that the program developers may be deemed as professional rather than amateurs working outside the confines of educational excellence.

Purpose, Objectives, and Research Questions

The purpose of this thesis is to inform educators of the impact that divorce may have on children, of possible factors contributing to resiliency in children of divorce, and of possible intervention efforts. To achieve this, the following objectives were defined and met:

- An extensive literature review was undertaken that considered the writings of various theorists, researchers, and authors, with varying perspectives.
- A qualitative, exploratory study of the reflective experiences of children of divorced parents was initiated; the data was compared and contrasted with the information collected in the literature review.

This was an exploratory study designed to prompt future development of programs and further research by educators. Examples of programs that may benefit are: parenting programs, grandparenting programs, premarital education, marital education, recovery programs, and self-enhancement programs.

The objectives of this thesis are reflected in the three major research questions addressed.

- How does divorce impact the children of divorcing and divorced couples, both immediately and long-term?

- What are the reflective experiences, past and present, of adults who have experienced parental divorce as children and what have they learned from this experience?
- What knowledge can be gained, from investigation and experience that may be useful to program planners and evaluators of educational material, to improve the content of programs that address the well-being of children of divorcing and divorced couples?

This thesis has brought together research from the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and family therapy, with insight from theorists, authors, journalists, parenting experts, and ordinary individuals who experienced parental divorce as children. It has investigated what researchers and those concerned about the well-being of children of divorce have learned about possible immediate and long-term outcomes. It has also explored the reflective experience of individuals whose lives have been impacted by parental divorce.

This study is unique because it offers a multitude of perspectives from various disciplines as well as personal experience.

Introduction to the Researcher

The experiences that construct our lives and the educational endeavours that we undertake become the building blocks for our continuing education. I have an extensive framework of life experiences and a somewhat varied background in education. It is the combination of these experiences that are the foundation upon which I position my present educational and research pursuits. As an adult, I returned to post-secondary education and obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in psychology. With this

foundation of behavioural science, I began graduate studies in family therapy. Feeling somewhat uncomfortable with the prospect of developing my personal skills as a family therapist, I considered education as an alternative medium to address problems historically dealt with in the context of therapy. It is from this perspective that I approach this subject.

The value of a life-long marriage and the fundamental worth of family have been two of the concrete blocks upon which my life has been built. But when I consider the reality of my world, I find that there is cognitive dissonance concerning the subject of a life-long marriage. Not everyone remains married for life. Until recently I had given minimal thought to the specific needs of children whose parents have divorced. I began to think differently when a member of our extended family terminated her marriage with a divorce. In the aftermath of the divorce what we found were three wounded children. This experience, among others, has been the impetus for this thesis.

Theoretical Framework

To address the first and third research questions in this thesis a significant literature review was undertaken. The study of possible outcomes of parental divorce was divided into two complementary but divergent perspectives; the juxtaposition of predictive and protective variables.

Those theorists that predicted outcomes—behavioural, emotional, social and those relational in nature—were explored first. The major developmental theorist is Erikson, who examined human development from a psychoanalytical perspective (Miller, 2002). Other theorists, researchers, and authors, such as Piaget and Wallerstein added to, and verified, the insight of Erikson. Outcomes for children of divorce were also drawn from

social psychologists and family therapists who explored the social, environmental, and relational factors that impact children following parental divorce. The literature review also focused on possible protective factors. Resilience theorists have contended that particular conditions can act as protection against negative outcomes (Wolchik & Sandler, 1997). Various other authors and researchers were examined as they presented research on such topics as positive parenting skills and grandparenting interventions.

In the context of this thesis, the term “children of divorce” refers to individuals of all ages who experienced parental divorce or separation before the age of twenty.

Summary of Research Methodology

The research undertaken employed a qualitative analysis of survey data. The survey questionnaire involved a series of open-ended and close-ended questions developed by the researcher for the purpose of answering the second question presented in the thesis: What are the reflective experiences, past and present, of adults who have experienced parental divorce as children and what have they learned from this experience? The survey questionnaire asked participants for demographic information, recall of experiences related to outcomes suggested by researchers, evaluation of adult relationships, and wisdom learned from the experience of parental divorce. The eleven participants in the research study were adult volunteers (21 or older) who experienced the divorce or separation of their parents when they were children (19 or younger). The researcher relied upon available participants.

This data was analyzed using a modified form of Grounded Theory. Originally developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, this inductive methodology allowed the researchers to generate theory from the perspective of their participants (Creswell, 2005).

According to Creswell (2005), Glaser saw grounded theory as a means for an author or researcher to explain a basic social process.

Other research studies have applied grounded theory in various modified forms. Helmeke and Sprenkle (2000) applied the method of grounded theory to generate themes concerning couples therapy— “grounded theory methodology was used to discover and identify key themes and patterns...and to guide the emergent process of generating hypotheses or assertions regarding pivotal moments” (p. 471). Spector, Greely, and Kingsley (2004) applied grounded theory methodology to generate suggestions for creating a science teacher education program.

Referring to the procedures and techniques of grounded theory, Strauss and Corbin (1990) have stated that, “insight and understanding about a phenomenon increase as you interact with your data. This comes from collecting and asking questions about the data, making comparisons, thinking about what you see, (and) making hypotheses” (p.43).

Further information on Grounded Theory can be found in Chapter Three— Methodology of Data Analysis.

Parameters and Limitations

The synthesis of knowledge presented in this thesis should inform educators about the particular experience of parental divorce; it should be a source from which program developers can draw relevant and meaningful material. Therefore, the knowledge gathered in the literature review should move beyond the limitations of experience to information that can be used by educators within a variety of educational programs. For example, effective parenting practice is one protective factor which falls within the

category of resiliency. Knowledge collected in this area will be useful for inclusion in programs that focus on parenting skills during and following divorce.

The thesis has focused on educating the educator. The educator is then responsible for building programs for adults who parent, grandparent, educate, or in any way interact professionally or non-professionally with children who have experienced parental divorce. Individuals who have experienced parental divorce as children will also potentially benefit from material gathered in this thesis, as the knowledge could be used in recovery and self-enhancement programming.

This thesis has not focused on building or evaluating one educational program, but has offered information that may be useful in a variety of educational programs. It is an exploratory study, offering knowledge that can be used by educators as the “first step” towards the development of future programs and the evaluation of present programs. This thesis has also not presented educational techniques that will accomplish transfer-of-learning.

The findings drawn from the analysis of the research data cannot be generalized to all members of this population. The participants were essentially hand-picked by the researcher or a representative of the researcher. The statements drawn from the research are flexible, ready for modification as new research produces new data. If given the opportunity other groups of participants may present additional or different insight into this subject.

The literature review and the research presented in this thesis illustrate to educators the necessity and urgency of educational intervention in this social issue. Drawing on this assortment of perspectives, the thesis offers a synthesis of knowledge,

along with discussion of that knowledge. This thesis draws on conclusions and discussions presented by a wide variety of theorists, authors, researchers, and journalists.

Summary

Chapter two, the literature review, begins with a brief discussion of divorce trends. This is followed by a review of the possible emotional and behavioural anomalies that children may exhibit at various stages of life. Social and economic problems, and relationship changes are discussed along with possible long-term outcomes. Resiliency factors are presented as well as parental behaviours that are related to resiliency in children. The literature review concludes with a presentation of material related to positive parenting and grandparenting. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of one parenting program.

The thesis then moves to research focused upon the reflective experience of parental divorce. Chapter three communicates the research methodology used in the present study. Chapter four presents the data collection and the data analysis. It discusses the research data, presenting categories, incidents, and findings. This chapter also offers advice from the participants.

The concluding chapter offers an overview of the research findings, comparing them to the literature review. It discusses possible implications for future educational programming and offers suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Divorce Trends

The Vanier Institute of the Family (Ambert, 2005) has used Statistics Canada data to track the “crude rates of divorce” (p. 5) in Canada. In 1987, 96,200 divorces were reported (the rate per 100,000 population was 362.3), in 2002, 70,155 divorces (the rate per 100,000 population was 223.7), and in 2003, 70,828 divorces were reported (the rate per 100,000 population was 224.0). The following table (Table 1) compares the number of Canadian divorces in selected years.

Table 1

Number of Canadian Divorces in Selected Years

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Divorces</u>	<u>Rates per 100,000 Pop.</u>
1968	11,343	54.8
1969	26,093	124.2
1987	96,200	362.3
2002	70, 155	223.0
2003	70,828	224.0

(Ambert, 2005)

The Daily (2004), which also utilized Statistics Canada data, uses the term “marriage stability” (p. 2) to describe divorce rates based on years of marriage. They stated that in 2002, 37.6 % of marriages were expected to end in divorce by the 30th wedding anniversary. Ambert (2005) does not use the term “marriage stability”. Both Ambert and *The Daily* (2004) have avoided the use of percentages on reporting the

number of divorces per year. To portray the fluctuation of divorce rates, *The Daily* does report that “the number of divorces is now 11.2% below the most recent high . . . in 1992 and 27.1% below the all-time peak . . . in 1987” (p. 1).

The statistic that ultimately portrays the necessity and urgency of the subject of this thesis is the estimated number of children who are affected by divorce. Although neither *The Daily* (2004) nor Ambert (2005) have available information from Statistics Canada on the number of dependents attached to the divorces that occurred in Canada, some researchers have offered estimates of the number of children experiencing parental divorce in the United States. Wolchik, Sandler, et al. (2002) have suggested that each year 1.5 million children in the United States may experience parental divorce. Staal (2000), a journalist who experienced parental divorce as a child has stated, “For my generation, divorce has taken on the social proportions of a Great Depression, a World War II, or a Vietnam in influencing our lives” (p. 2). Ambert (2005) has compiled information for The Vanier Institute of the Family, which was the vision of Governor General Georges P. Vanier. She has stated that “as more young couples choose to cohabit before marriage and as the ‘children of divorce’ who are at a higher risk of divorcing enter into marriage themselves, there are chances that divorce rates could keep rising” (Ambert, 2005, p. 6).

As the material obtained from the various professional and non-professional sources is interpreted, I am mindful that while children of divorce are frequently compared to the children of intact families, the latter group can not be construed as a perfect organism, nor can the parenting skills of non-divorced parents be seen as inevitably superior.

Emotional and Behavioural Outcomes: Developmental Theories

The second section of the literature review examines the possible emotional and behavioural responses to divorce, sometimes referred to as externalized and internalized problems or symptoms. Internalized symptoms refer to states of well-being with psychological measures including depression, self-esteem, and suicidal ideation (Rodgers & Rose, 2002). Externalized behaviours include drug and alcohol use, aggression, and delinquent conduct.

The list of possible emotional and behavioural anomalies that children can exhibit in response to parental divorce is diverse and very individual. One predictor of emotional and behavioural response is a child's developmental stage; the psychological tasks typically required during particular stages will affect the behaviour of the child. A general division of stages can be identified by age: infancy, preschool, middle childhood, adolescence, young adult, and adult (Feldman, 2001). Within these divisions are the elements of change: physical, cognitive, and social/personality.

Piaget's developmental theory understands each stage as it reflects the underlying mental structure expected in an individual (Miller, 2002). As developmental growth proceeds, each stage affects the following stage and is affected by the previous stage. The major divisions in Piaget's theory are as follows: sensorimotor (birth to 2 years), preoperational (ages 2-7), concrete operational (ages 7-11), and formal operational (ages 11-15).

Freud and Erikson are two theorists from the psychoanalytic discipline. Although Freud's stages (Miller, 2002) of oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital, have generated more curiosity, it is Erikson's format of stages that has produced significant workable

material. Erikson has produced an eight stage, life-span, psychosocial structure of development that involves descriptions of adaptive and maladaptive tendencies (Miller, 2002). The stages are as follows:

- basic trust versus basic mistrust,
- autonomy versus shame and doubt,
- initiative versus guilt,
- industry versus inferiority,
- identity versus identity diffusion,
- intimacy and solidarity versus isolation,
- generativity versus stagnation and self-absorption,
- integrity versus despair.

Erikson's developmental progress can be described with the following sequence: hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, care, and wisdom (Capps, 2004).

Because the emphasis of this chapter is on behavioural and emotional reactions to divorce, physical and cognitive development are discussed only briefly as they pertain to children's mental ability to understand a situation and their physical ability to respond. In the context of this thesis Erikson has developed the most appropriate sequence of stages and developments. Therefore, details of Erikson's developmental stages are examined as they relate to information provided by various researchers. Erik Erikson's explanation of his developmental stages can also be found in *Identity and the Life Cycle* (1980).

Infancy and Preschool

Erickson has theorized that children between birth and one year should acquire a sense of trust (Miller, 2002). This trust assures them that their mother or care-giver will comfort and feed them, and that others will accept them. By 12 months children have a sense of self-awareness and have acquired some knowledge of themselves (Feldman, 2001). From age one to three, during the autonomy versus shame and doubt stage, infants and toddlers are faced with issues such as being separated from parents, being successful with bodily functions, and seeing the possibility of failure (Miller, 2002).

Wallerstein, in collaboration with other researchers and writers, has spent over twenty-five years researching the outcomes of parental divorce. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (2003) have suggested that when a divorce occurs during these two stages, infants may respond to the tension and conflict within the home by crying and showing signs of distress. Toddlers may appear detached or they may cling to parents. Children at this stage can reflect the mood of the mother. If the mother is angry or frustrated, infants may respond to this disposition by also being fussy and restless.

Erikson's third stage of development, when children are about four to five years of age, is initiative versus guilt (Miller, 2002). Children at this stage tend to focus upon discovering what kind of person they are; they have the initiative to form goals and to carry them out. Children begin to develop their creative imagination. They want to be independent but feel conflict over the guilt that may result (Feldman, 2001).

When divorce occurs at this stage, children can respond with acute fear (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 2003). Children are confused by the changing moods of adults, the possible resulting lack of attention, and by alterations in their schedule. In

response, four and five year-olds may pretend to be babies; they may revert to past inabilities such as refusing to speak clearly or use the toilet. They may have tantrums, cling to parents, or refuse to attend daycare. Behaviours reported by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (2003, 1996) include the following: playing with baby animals that have their food taken by monsters, placing toy parents into bed together and then removing them, offering accounts of broken toys and bleeding, arranging dolls into happy family groups then evolving into an episode of anger and biting, and experiencing sleep disturbances and symptoms of depression.

Piaget's cognitive-stage theory suggests the limitations that young children have in understanding the actions and behaviours of the adults around them. Characteristic thought processes of children at this stage include egocentrism, rigidity of thought, semi-logical reasoning, and limited social cognition (Miller, 2002). Children are unable to see beyond their own perception; they give attention to only salient features, and have a limited ability to judge internal intent.

A study by Clarke-Stewart, McCartney, Vandell, Owen, and Booth (2000) considered the particular consequences of divorce on children who are less than three years of age. They stated the following:

Children in one-parent families (. . . never married . . . separated . . .) did not perform as well on tests of cognitive development at 15, 24, and 36 months; they had poorer social abilities at 24 months . . . and more behaviour problems at 24 and 36 months; they were less securely attached to their mother at 15 and 24 months . . .” (pp. 313, 316)

Zill et al. (1993) stated the following:

Our analysis provides some evidence that parental divorce in early childhood (i.e., before age 6 years) poses more of a risk to a young person's social and emotional development than does parental divorce at later ages. (p. 14)

Middle Childhood

Much of the research and information about children at this stage does not separate children who experienced divorce in the previous stages, who are now suffering long-term effects, from those children who have recently experienced divorce. Children are most affected, and show more psychological maladjustment during the first 6 months to 2 years following the divorce; they may be more anxious or depressed, and they may have more episodes of sleep difficulties and phobias (Feldman, 2001). Pagani, Boulerice, Tremblay, and Vitaro (1997) did not find a consensus among various researchers. They found that children exhibited more behavioural disturbances during school-age years when they experienced parental divorce before age 6.

Erikson has placed children from about age six to puberty in his fourth stage, which is described as industry versus inferiority (Miller, 2002). Erikson has proposed that children at this age enter into a world in which they are defined by what they learn. They draw on the trust, autonomy, and initiative that they have achieved in previous stages to be successful in this new learning environment. If children now experience success, mastery, and competence they will gain a sense of industry; failure, however, can leave children with feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. The child's radius of significant relations has moved from the basic family to include the neighbourhood and the school.

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (2003) have described this as straddling two worlds; children are shifting their attention from the family to the outside world. Anderson (1999) has stated that although parental life can become easier at this stage because children can be more helpful and are old enough to attend school, the broadening environment of children can create a problem with family identity. Children may begin to feel that they are different from others, sensing that they do not fit-in; this can result in behavioural problems.

Piaget described the pre-pubescent child as one who is moving towards a concrete operational stage of cognitive development with organized, formal, and logical mental processes (Feldman, 2001). They are better able to use logic and are less egocentric. These cognitive advances could make them more vulnerable to the tendency of incorporating themselves into the behaviours of their parents.

When a divorce occurs during this process, children may be more focussed on the divorce and their parents' struggles than on their new learning experiences and the challenge of developing friendships and playmates (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 2003). The behavioural effect of this shift in attention can be manifested in worry or anger. Children can experience sorrowful and worrisome thoughts, such as wondering if their mother will smile again or if their father will have food to eat. Children may withdraw or comfort themselves by developing fantasies. They may break-out in anger against what they perceive as parental misbehaviour or misbehave themselves, stealing or skipping class. On the other hand they may be obsessed with a parent's depression.

Amato and Keith (1991b) have looked specifically at the well-being of children of divorce in their meta-analysis of previous studies. In general they found that these

children did appear to have lower states of well-being. In his 2001 study, Amato reinforced his conclusion that children of divorce score significantly lower on measures of psychological adjustment. Amato offered an interesting speculation stating that “low-discord marriages that end in divorce appear to be especially distressing to children and are associated with long-term decrements in children’s adjustment and well-being . . . the type of divorce that is most distressing to children (i.e., separations preceded by relatively little inter-parental discord) may represent a greater proportion of all marital dissolutions” (Amato, 2001, p. 14).

Murphy (2004) has offered suggestions on identifying depression in children, citing anhedonia, or a lack of desire to enjoy activities, as a major symptom. Some other symptoms of depression are somatic complaints, aggression, poor school performance, peer problems, and preoccupation with death. Birmaher, Williamson, Dahl, Axelson, Kaufman, Dorn and Ryan (2004) compared duration, symptoms, and severity of depression in children with adolescents, and found similarities in the two groups. Children do experience major depression with reported duration lasting between eight and thirteen months.

Pagani et al. (1997) found that when the divorce happens while the children are still preschoolers, there is some evidence of defiant behaviour occurring later, when children are between the ages of six and twelve. This caused Pagani et al. to suggest a vulnerable period in children. These researchers also felt that hyperactive behaviour peaked at age 8 when a divorce occurred in pre-school years.

Adolescence

Erikson has placed adolescents into his fifth stage, which is identity repudiation versus identity diffusion (Miller, 2002). Another author used the terms identity cohesion and role confusion (Capps, 2004). Erikson has proposed that children who have attained trust, autonomy, initiative, and industry will be ready to reassemble these childhood identities to create an identity appropriate for this new age; and they will work towards a cohesive identity (Miller, 2002). The teenager's radius of significant relations has now moved to peer-groups and out-groups. Piaget has described children at this stage as being in the process of developing adult cognitive abilities, with the capability to use observations or results to generate hypotheses or propositions. Children are now gaining the skill to work with possibilities. It is a time when dramatic bodily changes cause children to become aware of their physical selves (Feldman, 2001). Pagani et al. (1997) has suggested that some latent reaction to an earlier divorce may manifest during adolescence.

Younger adolescents exhibit a wide range of responses to divorce, from panic and alarm, to quietness, or even rejoicing (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 2003). They may respond with dramatic flourish or with denial. As young people progress through their teen years, their response range may moderate, but Wallerstein and Blakeslee have observed that most teens initially react with distant and shaded emotions only to later flare with anger. Adolescents may see their parents' distraction with the divorce process as a signal to behave irresponsibly. It is a time when young people struggle with moral issues and their parents' behaviours can sometimes present them with a distressing dilemma. A fairly common reaction is to rush into risky behaviour. Wallerstein and

Blakeslee have suggested one aspect of gender difference concerning the behaviour of risky sexual conduct. A girl's feelings of anxiety and self-consciousness, as well as pleasure, are intensified because she is conscious that her bodily changes are observed not only by herself but by older males.

A number of studies have offered suggestions based on their research of past literature. It is suggested that there is a correlation between divorce and externalized and internalized behavioural problems in adolescents (Fergusson, Horwood, & Lynskey, 1994). There is an increased likelihood of lower measures of academic achievement, conduct, psychological adjustment, self-concept and social relation (Amato, 2001). Parental marital disruption is also associated with early sexual behaviour, teenage parenthood, and parenting outside marriage (Kiernan and Hobcraft, 1997).

Wallerstein and Lewis (2004) state that the young women in their study acted out more; one in five girls had sex before age 14 and over half had multiple sexual partners during high school. Wallerstein and Lewis have also suggested that adolescents with divorced parents may experience less protection, and they may have fewer rules.

The process of relating developmental stage with emotional and behavioural outcomes for children of divorce, has formed a base upon which other issues can be built. Children react to divorce by expressing themselves behaviourally, but this is just one factor in the divorce issue. With divorce comes social and economic upheaval along with disruption of various relationships. By exploring the behavioural outcomes, the stage has been set to further examine other elements involved in the divorce process.

Social and Economic Outcomes: Social-Psychology Theory

Following a marital dissolution three major changes may occur in the family that could have an effect on the children: families may experience an increase in economic hardship, there may be an intensification of psychological distress for the mother, and parenting behaviour may diminish (Clarke-Stewart et al., 2000).

This section presents some of the social and economic changes that may occur around divorce. It discusses, in particular, the possible economic hardships associated with parental divorce, the negative affects of mobility, and the possible compromise of education and opportunity. It should be noted that not all single-parent families suffer economic hardships, and a stereotyping of this family unit should not be encouraged.

Economic Hardships

The research of Ozawa and Yoon (2003) has indicated that six months previous and six months following marriage disruption, children were found to be worse off economically; the children in their study drastically lost economic ground in the divorce process. This study also presented the following findings: the poverty rate (U.S., 1995) for children with mothers who had never married was 59%, the rate for children with separated mothers the rate was 50.2%, and for children of divorced mothers the poverty rate was 28.5%.

Clarke-Stewart et al. (2000) compared children from various family environments to gain a general understanding of the factors that predict poor adjustment in children. They looked at family income, mother's education, ethnicity, belief, depression, along with marital status. The results of their study were consistent with other research, and showed that children from single-parent families have more behavioural problems. These

problems existed in families that had experienced divorce as well as in those families in which the mother had never married. They found that the later group fared worse and suggested that children who had experienced a portion of their life with both parents were better off. Because of these observations Clarke-Stewart et al. suggested that the experience of parental divorce may not be the factor that predicts poor adjustment, but that problems may result from other factors such as poverty, lower levels of maternal education, ethnicity, parenting beliefs, depression, and the inability to provide support and stimulation for the child.

In their earlier meta-analysis, Amato and Keith (1991b) noted inconsistency in the literature that examined the implications of divorce on children. Much of the conflicting data centers on the inability to separate the factors that are the direct results of the experience of divorce from factors that are the indirect results of experiencing life in a single-parent home.

Ahrons (2004) has investigated the childhood experiences of adult children of divorce. She found that past economic distress was still salient, with over half of her subjects discussing the economic changes that occurred following the divorce of their parents and their perception of a decreased standard of living. They recalled having to move to smaller homes, giving up extracurricular activities, and being given more responsibilities as their mothers worked longer hours. They remembered the anxiety, anger, and arguments about money issues.

Mobility Following Separation

With a decrease in standard of living frequently comes a change of environment; children of divorce may experience residential mobility. Parental divorce increases the

likelihood that children will move out of their familial neighbourhood (South, Crowder, and Trent 1998). South et al. have suggested that this move generally takes children to poorer neighbourhoods.

Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov, and Sealand (1993) have investigated the influence of neighbourhoods on children, examining the concept of collective socialization, which involves neighbourhood role models and monitoring as part of a child's socialization. In their book on trauma response, Wainrib and Bloch (1998) state the following:

Increased mobility of the population implies increase in loss to each family member. With each move, every member of the family must recreate his or her personal community and support system. The loss of friends can affect adults and children alike. Adults, however, have a longer history of experience and may understand that they are capable of remaking connections. Children may not, and each loss due to moving also contributes to children's cumulative losses and may increase their vulnerability to trauma. (p. 146)

Compromise of Education and Opportunity

The particular circumstances of some members of this population may interfere with the pursuit of opportunity. Based on investigation of literature, Furr (1998) has suggested that one possible social outcome of divorce is impaired educational achievement. The longitudinal data from a survey described by Zill et al. (1993) indicated that 25% of children from divorced families dropped out of school.

Research by Furr (1998) indicated that in families that had not experienced divorce, perceived encouragement and involvement from the father positively affected

college entrance scores. However, this was not the case with divorced families, when the father was a non-custodial parent. Furr has proposed that joint custody may help address some of these problems.

Wallerstein & Blakeslee (1996) have pointed out that some divorced parents may not always be positively connected to their children's academic achievements. The researchers did not find a high level of high school drop-out, but felt that most children did not seriously pursue higher education. They suggested that fathers tended to avoid the commitment of paying for the higher education of their children following the divorce. Wallerstein and Blakeslee believe that single parent families were less apt to discuss the future with their children. Ten years after the divorce of their parents, 60% of the children were "on a downward educational course compared with their fathers and 45%...on a similarly downward course compared with their mothers" (p.157). Having interviewed adult children of divorce, Ahrons (2004) does not draw the same conclusions as Wallerstein. In her studies Ahrons found that, on average, the children were more highly educated than their parents.

Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (2001) examined the connection between familial socioeconomic status and career trajectories. They state that "within the context of career development, self-efficacious parents are most likely to enhance their children's academic self-beliefs by expressing their promotive efficacy through high aspirations" (p.200). Bandura (1997) has promoted the concept of self-efficacy, which is the belief in one's capabilities. Zimbardo and Leippe (1991) have maintained that peoples' behaviour is highly influenced by what others think about them and how they act towards them. If a child perceives rejection from peers they are denied a sense of

social affiliation and stimulation, while parental rejection is worse, leaving a child with lasting imprints on their psychosocial development. Festinger (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991) has argued that people need to evaluate their ideas, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, and to confirm that they are correct in order to feel competent. One model of the comparison theory has suggested that unhappy people make upward comparisons, which result in negative emotions that are congruent with their mood state (Wood, Michela & Giordano, 2000).

Family Relationship Outcomes

“Divorce often sets in motion a multitude of stressors and changes in...relationship” (Wolchik, Tein, Sandler, & Doyle, 2002, p. 403). A national longitudinal survey described by Zill et al. (1993) found that in a population of 18 to 22-year-olds, 65% of adult children of divorce had a poor relationship with their fathers, and 30% had a poor relationship with their mothers. They were described as twice as likely as other young people to have poor parental relationships. Zill et al. (1993) have actually suggested that given the prospect of divorce resulting in poor relationships with adult children, parents should give pause and consider if they ought to work harder on their marriages or if nothing else, work to maintain relationships with both their children and their ex-spouse.

Knox, Zusman, and DeCuzzi (2004) examined relationship dynamics of college students and found similar results. A divorce or remarriage tended to weaken relationships between biological fathers and their children. They have suggested that the negative impact on relationship may be due to the low levels of involvement. If fathers continue to be emotionally, physically, and economically involved with their children the

negative effects may be mitigated. Knox et al. also found that compared to intact families, children of divorce are not as close to their biological mothers. One factor that affected the mother/child relationship was the degree to which the mother was distracted or exhausted emotionally by the divorce. The researchers found no further decrease in relationship when the mother remarried. In this study, although the data revealed weaker relationships within divorced families as compared with intact families, the majority of adult children did state that they had close relationships with their parents.

The Importance of Maintaining Good Relationships

Wolchik, Tein, et al, (2002) have hypothesised that one factor predicting post-divorce adjustment is exposure to divorce stressors, such as parental fighting, parental distress, changes in environment, and lost time with parents and other family members; and another is the quality of relationship that exists between custodial parents and the children. Wolchik, Tein, et al. (2002) have proposed that these two factors, divorce stressors and parental relationships, may influence how significantly children experience fear of abandonment. They suggest that children who have seen the departure of one parent from the family home may also fear the loss of the other parent.

Maternal acceptance and consistent discipline are seen as moderators of divorce stressors (Wolchik, Wilcox, Tein, & Sandler, 2000). Wolchik et al. (2000) examined the mother/child relationship and found that a positive relationship can act as a buffer to divorce stress. They found that when children have low acceptance and low consistency in discipline, there is a stronger relationship between divorce stressors and internalized/externalized problems. It did appear as if the inclusion of just one factor, acceptance or consistent discipline, altered the effect of divorce stressors on children.

When children experience consistency in discipline they may feel a greater sense of predictability about their environment. Ultimately children may feel more confident that mothers are able to support them in addressing other stress issues.

Various Features of the Parent-Child Relationship

Arditti (1999) has pointed out that relationships between children and parents are diverse and fluid in nature; and that divorce may bring a transformation in the quality of relationships.

Arditti (1999) looked at the mother/child relationship and has suggested that most studies focus on the negative and fail to see the positive. In her literature review, Arditti noted that researchers have suggested a shifting of boundaries following a divorce, with boundary violations or shifts in power. False equality with parents could result in unmet developmental needs and distrust in relationships. With shifting boundaries, children may be called upon to meet the emotional needs of parents, or they may be relied upon for empathy and affection. Role confusion may coincide with the disruption of boundaries, resulting in role reversal. Boundary disturbances may also create problems for children as they attempt to accomplish self-differentiation, or separateness. If parents are over-dependant on their children, they may fail to properly facilitate individuation. Parental self-preoccupation with problems could result in a failure to provide adequate connections to the child.

In her search for positive aspects of relationships and the strengths that can be found in mother/child relationships, Arditti (1999) interviewed college students whose parents had divorced. It was acknowledged that a retrospective look, which involved exploration of a relationship that had changed with the child's change of residence and

had also changed with maturity, may facilitate more empathic views toward mothers. The young adults in Arditti's study acknowledged the support and involvement of their mothers, and generally recalled relationships that were close and satisfying. Although relationships were diverse, mothers were generally viewed as friends, with mothers sometimes relying upon children for support and advice. Arditti has suggested that this type of relationship was viewed positively by children and that they welcomed their mother's withdrawal of control. She feels that this type of relationship may develop, in the children, a sense of equality, and closeness to their mothers. It was acknowledged that this emotional reliance may, at some point, be seen as negative. Arditti found that sometimes mother-daughter relationships were close during preadolescence but gravitated toward some conflict in later adolescence. She suggested that the mother's reliance upon the daughter for emotional support might not interrupt the developing autonomy of the child. It did appear, however, that mothers benefited most from this type of relationship. There was also a gender difference. Arditti (1999) did not find this best friend scenario emerging between mothers and sons.

Koerner, Wallace, Lehman, and Raymond (2002) presented an opposing view to that offered by Arditti. Having collected data from adolescent girls during the first two years following parental divorce, the researchers found evidence that countered the claim that daughters benefit from relationships with mothers where sensitive material is disclosed. The authors have described sensitive material in four ways: financial concerns, occupational ups and downs, personal concerns, and negativity toward a child's father. Adolescent girls who experienced relationships that involved disclosure of sensitive materials were found to suffer greater psychological distress, but did not report

feeling closer to mothers. It was suggested that listening to the concerns of a mother may cause the daughter to worry. The researchers were also concerned that the behaviour could create a triangulation situation.

Simply stated, Bowen's theory (Gilbert, 1992) has described triangulation as "bringing into focus a third party, rather than solving the relationship problem of the original twosome" (p. 74), or "a third person, who is sensitized to the anxiety in a couple, moves in to offer reassurance or calm things down" (Nichols & Schwartz, 2004, p. 122). An emotionally mature individual, in this case a mother, does not "route their anxiety through another person" (Gilbert, 1992, p. 14). The ideal relationship between children and parents is characterized by openness, equality and separateness (Gilbert, 1992). Parents and children are not equal in strengths and skills, but they are equal in humanness and potential. There is mutual respect as separate boundaries are fostered. Open communication, which does not involve a preoccupation with feelings but makes clear one's thinking, helps prevent relationships from becoming distant. Bowen's theory has described the undifferentiated person as emotionally reactive with little autonomous identity (Nichols & Schwartz, 2004). Differentiation can also be seen as "the process of partially freeing oneself from the emotional chaos of one's family" (Nichols & Schwartz, 2004, p.121). Parents can transmit a lack of differentiation on to their children, which is referred to as family projection process; parents can also transmit chronic anxiety, a concept referred to as multigenerational transmission process.

Mayseless, Bartholomew, Henderson, and Trinke (2004) examined the issue of role reversal, and have offered a definition based on their interpretation of Minuchin's ideas. Salvador Minuchin developed concepts for family therapy in the early 1960's

(Nichols & Schwartz, 2004). In role reversal, a child assumes the responsibilities expected of a parent such as cleaning, or offering advice and comfort, when a parent is unable or unwilling to give guidance and protection (Mayseless et al., 2004). This role reversal can develop when “families are unable to maintain hierarchical generational boundaries in which parents guide and nurture their children and children seek comfort and advice from their parents” (Mayseless et al., 2004, p. 78). Role reversal is not necessarily seen as pathological, but can be problematic when the development of children is interrupted, or when children are not acknowledged or valued for their behaviours (Mayseless et al., 2004). Enmeshment, triangulation, and problems with autonomy are some associated aspects. Mayseless et al. reviewed literature that suggested a connection between role reversal and depression or anxiety. It was also suggested that children who experienced role reversal may assume the role of caretaker in adult relationships. The research accomplished by Mayseless et al. (2004), which involved surveys and interviews of Vancouver individuals, found that children who experienced role reversal did not necessarily inherit the behaviours of a caretaker as adults. The authors of the study have suggested three patterns of role reversal: guardian/protector, a situation in which a child parents the adult and is rewarded with appreciation and closeness; compliant/pleaser, which involves rejection and a child’s efforts to please (sometimes seen with workaholic parents); and spousified girls, which involves a sexual component. Outcomes for these children varied, from coping well, as they might in a guardian/protector situation, to being disturbed with psychological symptoms, as would be the case with spousified girls (2004).

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (2003) have described children of divorce in role reversal situations as overburdened. They suggest that parent/child relationships may slowly progress from a special closeness, to the child becoming the confidante and advisor of the parent. If this situation is temporary, children may benefit, but it could be detrimental if parents continue to lean upon children for emotional help, using them as a captive audience.

King (2002) examined trust as it develops within parent/children relationships, and found that “trust in parents, intimates and others is strongly linked to positive parent-teen relationships regardless of parental divorce” (p.1). With past research as her reference, King has stated that individuals are frequently unhappy and isolated, less satisfied with relationships, and may possess poor self concepts, when interpersonal trust is low. Divorce may alter the quality, quantity, and timing of interaction between children and parents. Following a divorce, children may question the permanence of relationships. The divorce may also disrupt ties with other important individuals, such as grandparents and friends. “Parental divorce can disrupt parent-child ties and negatively interfere with a child’s developing sense of trust” (King, 2002, p. 3).

Bowlby has defined attachment as “the propensity of human beings to make strong affectional bonds to particular others” (Platts, Tyson, & Mason, 2002, p. 332). Clarke-Stewart et al. (2000) have speculated that attachment style may be one factor affecting positive or negative psychological adjustment in very young children following a divorce. Nair and Murray (2005) also looked at attachment style in preschool children. They used the strange-situation test developed by Ainsworth, which categorizes infants into one of three conditions according to how they respond to separation and reunion with

their mothers. The categories are as follows: secure attachment is cited when the child is confident of availability of the mother; insecure-avoidant attachment is indicated when a child is not likely to cry at separation and is unresponsive at parental return; and insecure-resistant attachment describes a child who is likely to cry at separation and return, and where there is little active approach to the mother (Waters, Hamilton, & Weinfield, 2000). Using this strange-situation procedure, Nair and Murray (2005) determined that more infants with divorced parents demonstrated insecure attachment than infants from intact families. Nair and Murray suggested that divorce depression may cause a mother to become more punitive or authoritarian, and less sensitive and responsive. They also suggested that insecure attachment may be a precursor to later behavioural problems such as over dependence and the tendency to elicit negative attention from others.

Waters et al. (2000) have hypothesised that particular life-events, including divorce, may influence the stability of attachment by changing the relationship between children and parents, and by increasing the stress experienced by parents. They felt that changes in attachment are not random but that they are related to events that may change the caregiver and their behaviour.

Waters et al. (2000) have also hypothesized that the attachment style incorporated during infancy may influence adult representation of attachment style. Citing Bowlby, they have suggested that it is possible that a child's early relationship with their caregiver can lead to a generalization of expectations concerning themselves and others. Werner-Wilson and Davenport (2003) summarized Bowlby stating that experiences that children have with caregivers can influence their expectations concerning future relationships.

Werner-Wilson and Davenport have attempted to connect attachment styles with adult romantic attachments.

Lopez, Melendez, and Rice (2000) surveyed college students to examine whether parental bonds predicted attachment orientation in adult children of divorce. They found that parental marital status did affect some attachment measures. Recall of early bonding was adversely impacted by the experience of parental divorce, but divorce did not appear to impact the current adult attachment orientation of the college-age students.

Knowledge of these relationship theories, sometimes from the perspective of family therapists, is vital to an understanding of how to address the problems of children of divorce through educational approaches.

Long-Term Outcomes

Researchers and authors have frequently referred to the long-term outcomes of parental divorce as the “legacy” left by the parents. This section begins with an interpretation of the literature compiled by two authors, with different perspectives, as they discuss the long-term outcomes for children of divorce. This is followed by a collection of research accumulated by various authors who have addressed topics related to long-term outcomes.

Two Individualistic Interpretations of Long-term Outcomes

Constance Ahrons and Stephanie Staal have presented somewhat different perspectives on the long-term outcomes of parental divorce. Ahrons (2004) is a sociologist who experienced a divorce in her personal life. Staal (2000) is a journalist whose parents divorced when she was fourteen. Both authors interviewed adult children of divorce in an attempt to understand the issues of long-term outcomes.

Ahrons (2004) has stated that “for the great majority of children who experience a parental divorce, the divorce becomes part of their history but it is not a defining factor. . . [most adult children of divorce live] reasonably happy, successful lives” (p.11).

Ahrons (2004) also states that,

Although I do not want to minimize the potential long-term effects of a parental divorce, I think it is a mistake to exaggerate its negative impact, because it causes us to distort the realities. There is no doubt that a parental divorce temporarily upsets the equilibrium of children’s lives, but we also know that it is our perception of a life event that influences our reaction. (p. 25)

Ahrons (2004) tends to place society somewhat at fault for viewing children of divorce as deficient; she feels that this attitude reinforces children’s negative image. Society should create messages to encourage the self-esteem of children. She has questioned the practice of relating low levels of achievement in adults to their history of family trauma. Ahrons does not approve of the way divorce has sometimes been pathologized by society, and has suggested that the placement of a label upon a child can create a stigma. This practice encourages children to “blame the divorce for whatever unhappiness they may feel” (p. 11). Pathologizing divorce can be carried into institutions as well, “Teachers are often too quick to identify divorce as the reason for a child’s school behaviour problem” (p.11).

Ahrons (2004) appears to endorse narrative therapy, which works to change negative interpretations of events to a positive version. Narrative therapy is one of the dominant approaches in family therapy, with its techniques of confronting pessimistic versions of events and ‘restorying’ people’s narratives of their lives (Nichols & Schwartz,

2004). Some of the questions Ahrons asked her subject were from the orientation of narrative therapy. For example, one of the questions asked of the adult children of divorce was what they saw as positive outcomes of their parents' divorce.

Ahrons (2004) determined that 20% of the subjects in her study felt devastating impact from the divorce and blamed parents for their difficulties and failures in relationships, as well as in their lives. Yet, out of 173 adult children of divorce who were asked, 78% said that they were either better off or "not affected" (Ahrons, 2004, p. 31) by their parents' divorce.

Stephanie Staal (2000) approached long-term outcomes from a different perspective. After experiencing the divorce of her parents at the age of fourteen, Staal eventually convinced herself that she had outgrown the divorce and was moving on with her life. She later discovered that this was not the case. She realized that the divorce was not just in her past but that it had begun to "infect" (Staal, 2000, p. 17) her future. The perspective taken by Staal (2000) is that for many children of divorce "the past walks alongside the present" (p. 2). Staal has pointed out that although parental divorce is seen as leading to such behaviours as substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, and criminal behaviour, it should be acknowledged that many children of divorce have successful outcomes.

Staal (2000) discovered that everyone from psychologists to feminists and conservatives were offering their perspective on divorce. As a journalist, Staal began to interview other individuals to determine if the realities of her life were being played-out in the lives of other adult children of divorce. She found that parental divorce has an enduring effect on adult relationships and that one of the problems within adult

relationships is a fear of intimacy. She related this fear of intimacy to a lack of having obtained a sense of personal identity during the appropriate developmental stage.

As has been previously noted in this literature review, in his stages of development, Erikson placed the task of creating a coherent identity at the adolescence stage (Miller, 2002). If this task is insufficiently accomplished, a child may experience role confusion (Capps, 2004). Development of a coherent identity will open the way to intimacy as a young adult (Miller, 2002).

Staal (2000) has suggested that when children lack the basic information about their parents' romance, they have difficulty forming a sense of identity. Staal became preoccupied with the task of determining why her parents married in the first place and why they could not remain married. When parents do not offer a model of intimacy, the child is left to invent intimacy. Allegorically she proposed that, for her, building intimacy was like attempting to waltz when the partners have never been taught to dance. Along with a fear of intimacy, Staal believes that the process of divorce teaches children to hide emotions. Staal has stated that as a child she responded to questions concerning her parents' divorce in a positive manner. She was always fine with the divorce. Staal has also suggested that children of divorce have difficulty trusting the love of others and trusting their own love. She grouped adult children of divorce into three categories of relationships: the Wary Investor, the Commitment-phobic, and the Nester (2002). The Wary Investor seriously deliberates romantic choices with fear of investment and loss; the Commitment-phobic is fearful of commitment, vulnerability, and loss of independence; and the Nester needs non-stop reassurances of love and fears being alone.

With the cathartic exercise of writing, Staal (2002) has found that she can look at both the positive and the negative outcomes of her parents' divorce. Staal has not blamed her parents for the various residual outcomes that have sometimes suspended her life.

Despite the fact that one author looked optimistically, and the other somewhat pessimistically, at the outcomes of divorce, both Staal and Ahrons have brought thoughtful insight into the study of this subject.

Research Related to Long-term Outcomes

Past research has offered mixed results on whether or not adult children of divorce marry at a younger age or if they tend to delay marriage (Wolfinger, 2003). Wolfinger has suggested that they may exhibit particular patterns in the timing of marriages; typically choosing to either marry before the age of twenty or sometimes deciding not to marry at all. The later could be the result of the option to cohabitate or it could be the result of interpersonal problems. Wolfinger has offered three arguments to explain why children may marry at a younger age. Firstly, it is possible that they may want to escape a poor home environment, although it can be argued that unlike the past it is now common to leave home well before marriage. Secondly, children may marry earlier because of economic hardship and a lack of alternatives. A third argument proposes that children of divorce may have an "inner neediness" (Wolfinger, 2003, p. 340) that may result in efforts to become romantically involved at a young age.

Having drawn on the data from past studies, Martin, Martin, and Martin (2001) suggest that children from homes with an absent father are more likely to experience early sexual intercourse than children with two resident parents. Also drawing on past studies and surveys, Kiernan and Hobcraft (1997) have proposed that children who have

experienced parental disruption may begin sexual activity at an earlier age and they may be more likely to cohabit. A Canadian study by Hall and Zhao (1995) found that cohabitation does not enhance marital stability. Kirk (2003) used a sample of undergraduate students to examine the outcome of parental divorce on relationship competence and did not find that divorce had an effect. She found that parental divorce did have an effect on the fear or expectation of divorce in this group of subjects.

Wallerstein and Lewis (2004) have also proposed that children of divorce encounter difficulties with love, sexual intimacy and marital commitment. They found that some children were haunted by parental divorce, fearful of repeating their parents' behaviour. Some individuals had pessimistic attitudes towards marriage, and others desperately sought lasting relationships. Even within the context of satisfying marriages, some individuals expressed the fear of marital break-up. Wallerstein and Lewis found that none of the women in their study were consistently alone. Some women were attracted to men with needs, others looked to "attract, conquer, reject, and quickly move on" (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004, p. 13), and others were driven by anger. Men were more likely to avoid relationships with 42% not having committed to any relationship, marriage or cohabitation, for longer than six months. Wallerstein and Lewis determined that 60% of women and 40% of men had established enduring relationships. Comparing this group of adult children of divorce with a group of adults from intact families, Wallerstein found that unlike the first group, the later group did not expect to fail at their relationships.

According to the data examined by Zill et al. (1993) 40% of the surveyed individuals had received psychological help. Parental divorce is associated with a

lifetime risk of depression (Gilman, Kawachi, Fitzmaurice, & Buka, 2003). Turner and Butler (2003) examined the effect that traumatic events, including separation of parents, can have on depressive disorder and depressive symptoms in young adults. The authors suggested that certain stressful situations in childhood can create a “matrix of disadvantage” (Turner & Butler, 2003, p. 3), and that these childhood adversities can implicate exposure to stressors in later life. They presented the concept of learned helplessness, suggesting that a lack of success in one area may create within the individual a sense that they will be ineffective in coping with stressful situations in other areas of their life.

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1996) found a pattern of behaviour in some of the young men who had experienced parental divorce that reflected a constriction of emotion. One typical young man from their study buried himself in his work and rarely placed himself in social situations.

Zill et al. (1993) suggested that negative long-term outcomes can be expected following parental conflict because the transition into adulthood may trigger conflict; there can be confusion of loyalties and values, or perhaps motivation to get back at parents. Conflict in a marriage can instigate behaviour problems in children, which could leave the child with poor interpersonal styles that in turn negatively affect that individual’s marital quality (Amato & Booth, 2001). Children may observe and learn behaviours from their parents that adversely affect marriage relationships. They may also use the poor strategies of conflict-resolution modeled by their parents.

Amato and Keith (1991a) did not find absolute consistency in the literature concerning long-term effect of divorce on adult well-being; some studies found little or

no association between parental divorce and adult well-being. Following their analysis of 37 studies, the authors concluded that “the argument that parental divorce presents few problems for children’s long-term development is simply inconsistent with the literature on this topic” (Amato & Keith, 1991a, p. 54). They found that there are negative consequences of divorce that affect adult life. But in some cases parental divorce was just one factor among many that predispose individuals to psychological and behavioural problems.

Resilience

To this point, the literature review has focused upon factors that may predict adverse outcomes of parental divorce. With this section, a shift is made to include those factors that may be considered protective in nature.

Resilience has been defined by Wright and Masten (2005) as “a pattern of positive adaptation in the context of past or present adversity” (p. 18). Naglieri and LeBuffe (2005) have contended that there may be no universally accepted definition, that the definition of resilience is tied to the factors that influence and describe it. They state that resilience “refers to positive outcomes, adaptation, or the attainment of developmental milestones or competences in the face of significant risk, adversity, or stress” (Naglieri & LeBuffe, 2005, p. 108).

According to Wolchik and Sandler (1997), recent research has begun to more fully address the variables that affect resiliency in children. Sandler, Wolchik, MacKinnon, Ayers, and Roosa (1997) have identified three sources of resilience: the individual characteristics of a child, the child’s relationship with their primary caretaker, and the child’s extra-familial resources.

Individual Difference as a Resilience Factor

Wright and Masten (2005) have listed a number of characteristics that may enable children to better adapt:

- having a temperament in infancy that is social and adaptable,
- having good cognitive abilities and problem-solving skills
- being able to effectively use strategies to regulate emotions and behaviours
- having a positive view of self, which may include self-confidence, high self-esteem, and self-efficacy
- having a positive outlook on life or being hopeful
- having faith and a sense of meaning in life
- possessing characteristics that are valued by society and self, such as talents, sense of humour, and attractiveness to others. (p.24)

Grych and Fincham (1997) found that individual thinking may be affected by cognitive errors such as over-generalizing. Individual variations in thinking have an effect on positive or negative adaptation. Studies on the role of locus of control indicate that when children have some sense of control over their lives they adapt better. Children who seek-out and utilize the help of others may adapt better. The authors have proposed the need for further research in this area.

Family and Social Support as Resilience Factors

Parents, relatives, siblings, peers, and other non-familial adults can contribute to a child's adjustment and sense of well-being (Grych & Fincham, 1997). Positive adaptation is most likely to occur when a supportive relationship exists between children and at least one parent, with best results occurring when a good relationship continues

with both parents. Grandparents and other family members may contribute to children's adaptation by reducing some of the fears experienced by children. They may help fill basic needs and provide extras such as recreational and educational activities. Relatives can help children understand the situation, correcting misunderstandings that may be present. Contact with grandparents may improve social and academic adjustment. Sibling can also provide support, although this may be dependant upon the age of children, their gender, the level of empathy children may have, and particular loyalties to parents. As children get older they may seek peers as sources of advice and emotional support. It is thought that children who can enlist support from others will experience healthier long-term adjustment.

Schools, daycares, sports groups, and social groups, can also place children in a position to access helpful individuals; they may also offer children a sense of stability, connection, and consistency (Grych and Fincham, 1997).

Sandler et al. (1997) have suggested that social support may mitigate the debilitating effects of stress; it may affect self-esteem and children's perception of control. Social support may improve coping processes in the following ways:

- by teaching or reinforcing coping efforts and appraisals
- by modeling ways of dealing with stress
- by providing a context of support for coping with and appraising stressors
- by offering access to resources.

Social interaction that occurs outside the context of stress is also significant in facilitating children's coping. A child may be better able to access and seek support if they have developed a network of relationships.

Later sections focus upon particular parenting and grandparenting behaviours that may build resilience and benefit adjustment in children.

Additional Research on Stress and Resilience Factors

Sandler et al. (1997) have speculated that children can experience stress as a result of: environmental change, life events, or chronic conditions. Small events may add to the effects of major events and can influence children's well-being. How children adapt to stressful events may depend on their individual coping tactics. Sandler et al. (1997) have offered the following three variables of coping:

- coping resources- children's temperament and character, the beliefs that they have about themselves and the world around them, and the individual skills that they may have
- coping styles- the generalized strategies typically used to approach problems
- coping efforts- cognitive and behavioural actions used in specific situations to manage the problem.

Looking more directly at children's adaptation to divorce, Grych and Fincham (1997) examined the aspects of divorce that are particularly stressful. In a survey asking children what they found most stressful, researchers found the following:

- being blamed for the divorce
- parents hurting each other and arguing with each other
- hearing negative things about parents
- a parent getting mad at them or moving away from them
- having to give up things like pets and friends.

Empirical research has also suggested inter-parental conflict, parent-child relationships, and environmental changes.

Rodgers and Rose (2002) examined specific aspects of resilience in adolescents, suggesting that protective factors are within children's characters and within their environments. They cited temperament, age, gender, race, and coping strategies as possible factors, along with parental factors like conflict, support, and monitoring. Rodger and Rose found that all adolescents benefited from school attachments but that non-family factors did not necessarily provide protection against specific risk factors such as low parental support.

Leon (2003) looked at risk factors and protective factors specific to young children and suggested that, like older children, parenting quality, conflict, and the emotional well-being of parents are important factors. Parental warmth and responsiveness are important throughout childhood.

Ahrons (2004) has defined resilience as "the ability to bounce back from adversity, to face a crisis with the resources to adapt" (p. 194). She contends that resilience is not an extraordinary trait, but that everyone has the capacity to be resilient; it is something that can be taught. According to Ahrons, individual factors that can affect resiliency are temperament, intelligence, age, gender, birth order, and physical appearance. Some buffers that she has suggested might facilitate resiliency are friends, neighbours, church, school activities, co-parenting, or at least one nurturing and supportive parent.

Resilience: Parental Behaviours

This section looks at parental behaviour and how parents can modify their actions to better facilitate the adaptation of their children. The research presented in this literature review has clearly identified parental behaviour as a positive or negative factor in building resilience in children. Ahrons (2004) suggests that preparing children for the divorce will help resiliency. She has offered six suggestions that form what she sees as a winning formula in helping children thrive following a divorce.

- Parents should be nurturing and supportive.
- Parents should not involve their children in their conflicts.
- Parents should be involved in their children's lives.
- Parents should respect the other parent's rights.
- Parents should communicate their children's needs to each other.
- Parents should offer a secure and stable family environment.

Like Ahrons (2004), other authors have cited a number of parental behaviours that can influence how children adapt to a divorce.

Communication about Divorce and Separation Impact

Kelly and Emery (2003) reviewed empirical literature on adjustment to parental divorce. They suggest that the stress of separation can be moderated by communicating appropriate information to children and taking appropriate steps to lessen the impact of separation from one parent. Children can feel isolated and confused when parents fail to inform them about separation and divorce. One study referenced by Kelly and Emery (2003) indicated that 23% of children were offered no information concerning their

parents' divorce, 45% were offered one or two- line explanations, while only 5% of children felt that they had been fully informed.

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (2003) found that, unlike parents, children generally do not anticipate the improvements that a divorce may bring. Most children want parents to remain together even when they are aware that their mother or father may be unhappy. Wallerstein and Blakeslee have suggested that, if possible, the children should be told before the separation occurs so that they are prepared. Young children should be told a day or two in advance, school-age children a few days to a week, and adolescents perhaps two weeks in advance. If the separation occurs suddenly and beyond the control of one parent, children should receive an apology from the parents. Children need to be told that their parents are concerned about them and their well-being. Parents should cooperate in planning how to present this situation to their children; parents "owe their children the gift of civility and cooperation at this transformative moment in their lives" (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 2003, p. 22). Parents should not be afraid to show their sorrow and tears. They should be open and honest, explaining the divorce and the planned arrangements.

Stephanie Staal (2000) has suggested that children need to know some history of the love that existed between their parents. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (2003) advise that children be told of past love between parents and of the love that parents will always have for the child. This process can help to protect children's self-image and self-esteem. Children need to be told, clearly and honestly, why the marriage is not working, assuring them that effort has been made to prevent the divorce. Explanation of infidelity should be age appropriate. When children are over the age of ten more can be said, but details are not appropriate. Children should retain respect for their parents; seeing their parents

behaving sensibly will help children deal with later problems. They need to be given the opportunity to speak, to restate what they think they have been told about the divorce, and to express their worries and priorities.

Recalling memories of her parents' divorce, Petherbridge (2005) has related the torture she felt as a child, feeling that she had been responsible for her parents' break-up. She was unable to remember details of this period in her life until many years later. Petherbridge entreats parents to talk with their children and not just offer vague explanations. Children need to be assured repeatedly that they are not to blame. They need to be told why the divorce is occurring.

Based on their research Kelly and Emery (2003) speculate that stress is intensified during the initial stages of separation because children are separated, sometimes for prolonged periods, from one parent. Children are likely affected by unfamiliar schedules, new living arrangements, shifts between households, difficult visiting arrangements, and the inability to communicate with both parents at-will. Ahrons (1999) has also suggested an orderly separation that is prepared for and planned for in advance. Abrupt departures may create the ultimate rejection; individuals may feel abandoned and helpless.

Author Joseph Sclafani (2004) has offered a number of suggestions of parental behaviours and attitudes that will help children. He has advised that parents should allow time for children to readjust, clearly assuring them that the divorce is not their fault; they should assure their children of access to both parents, and work to maintain schedules and routines. Parents should continue to discipline, and keep children out of the middle. The author also advises parents to encourage children to talk about their needs, being prepared to address those needs with outside resources.

Parents should take care to make arrangements and decisions wisely and with the children's interest in mind (Kelly and Emery, 2003). Recent reports on custody suggest that children adjust better when they are in joint custody situations than when sole-custody is the arrangement. In regards to custody, Leon (2003) found mixed results in studies that investigated contact with non-residential parents. One study indicated that frequent overnight visits with fathers were related to high attachment disorganization in infants. The authors of this study considered the possibility that frequent transition between homes may have affected outcomes. Kelly and Emery (2003) have reported that children benefited from frequent visits with fathers when a close relationship had been maintained through separation, when fathers were involved in the children's schooling, when they were authoritative in their parenting style, and when they provided financial support. As compared to twenty years ago, children have more contact with fathers; cultural changes and work trends have improved the role expectancy of fathers. Kelly and Emery have stated that it is hard to ignore the facts, that children of divorce frequently develop feelings of loss and they are likely to question whether or not their fathers love them. Some of these doubts may be the result of having not been consulted about living arrangement and access to parents. Parents should, however, use caution and avoid burdening children with the responsibility of making decisions.

Parental Conflict

Based on their research, Kelly and Emery (2003) have identified parental conflict as a major source of stress for children of divorce; "20-25% of children experience high conflict during their parents' marriage" (p. 3). Conflict between couples is sometimes reduced following a divorce, but other divorced couples have continued their conflictive

behaviour. Another study (Kelly, 2000) found that hostility diminished following a divorce, but that 8% to 12% of divorced couples remained in conflict three years later. In some families conflict was ignited during the separation (Kelly & Emery, 2003).

Some factors of parental conflict that can affect children's adjustment are as follows: the intensity and frequency of parental conflict, the manner in which conflict is resolved, the style of conflict, and the possible presence of protective buffers (Kelly, 2000). Past research has confirmed that post-divorce conflict is most destructive when parents use their children to express their rage toward their divorced partners (Kelly & Emery, 2003). Children may be caught in the middle; they may be asked to carry hostile messages or to spy on the other parent (Kelly, 2000). Parents may talk aggressively on the phone, prohibit a child from talking about the other parent, or degrade the other parent in front of the child (Kelly & Emery, 2003). In a longitudinal study of marital discord, Amato and Booth (2001) found that the following parental behaviours had particular long-term consequences: "jealousy, being domineering, getting angry easily, being critical, being moody, and not talking to the spouse" (p. 627).

Sclafani (2004) has warned against Parental Alienation Syndrome. Parental alienation is described as the practice of one parent convincing the children that the other is a poor parent, who is not loveable, caring, or trustworthy (Garrity & Baris, 1994). One study found that parental alienation was a factor in 90 percent of divorce cases when there was an extended custody battle (Sclafani, 2004). It was suggested that this behaviour appears at some level in most divorce situations, but normally it subsides. Parental alienation places children at risk of developmental and adjustment difficulty (Garrity & Baris, 1997). "Bad divorces are those in which spouses are unable or

unwilling to settle their marital related conflicts without enmeshing the children in their divorce drama. Children in these divorces often lose a relationship with one parent (usually the father), are caught in painful loyalty conflicts about their parents, and suffer irreparable emotional damage” (Ahrons, 1999, p. 395).

Conflict and violence within the home is extremely complicated and a thorough study of this subject is beyond the parameters of this thesis. Brief mention of this subject is not an indication of insignificance.

Parental Well-being and Relationship between Parents

Kelly and Emery (2003) have suggested that parental adjustment can have an effect on children. Good parenting can begin with a healthy sense of personal well-being. During the process of divorce “parents typically are under enormous strain themselves and may not be as available (emotionally or physically) as their children would like” (Grych & Fincham, 1997, p. 172). According to Carter and McGoldrick (1999), following divorce women may lose their sense of identity, seeing the divorce as a personal failure. Men may require help in dealing with loss and guilt. Steps need to be taken to overcome emotions such as hurt, anger, and guilt.

Ahrons (1999) has identified five types of relationships that can develop between divorced partners: “perfect pals, cooperative colleagues, angry associates, fiery foes, and dissolved duos” (p. 392). In a good divorce ex-couples will “integrate the divorce into their lives in a healthy way. Although the structure of the family has been altered, parents continue to enact their parental roles, and the process of socializing and being responsible for their children’s emotional and economic needs continues” (Ahrons, 1999, p. 395).

In Bowen family therapy (Gilbert, 1992) divorced couples are encouraged not to remain cut-off from each other. They are to develop an open and cooperative relationship. Individuals should direct themselves away from automatically reacting negatively to the behaviours of their ex-spouse. They should respond with calmness and thoughtfulness, explaining to the other what they are thinking.

Other authors have suggested an additional step in establishing a new relationship with ex-partners that will also accomplish an emotional release. Forgiveness has been cited as a means of coping (Rye, Pargament, Pan, Yingling, Shogren, & Ito, 2005). Forgiveness can be defined as “letting go of negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviour in response to an injustice and may involve responding positively toward an offender” (Rye et al., 2005, p. 2). Forgiving does not involve forgetting, condoning, or excusing the offender from responsibility, but it recognizes the pain and injustice an individual may have suffered. Forgiveness is related to improvement in well-being, a lessening of depression and anger (Rye, Folck, Heim, Olszewski, & Traina, 2004).

Another study examined how forgiveness can affect the well-being of adolescent children of divorce (Freedman, 2003). Adolescents, who were involved in an educational intervention that encouraged forgiveness of parents, not only developed a sense of forgiveness towards parents, but they also experienced a positive influence on their well-being.

Interventions: Parenting Skills and Grand-Parenting

The information presented throughout this literature review has clearly indicated that parenting practice has a strong influence upon the positive or negative outcomes of divorce. This section looks at parenting styles that may promote resilient and

psychologically healthy children. Literature on divorce has also strongly indicated that good relationships with extended family are beneficial to all individuals involved in the divorce process. Therefore, a discussion on positive grand-parenting is included in this section.

Constructive Parenting Styles

Ballantine (2001) described four main styles of parenting: authoritarian, permissive, neglectful, and authoritative.

- Authoritarian is seen as demanding, with little responsiveness toward or trust in children; open communication is not encouraged and parents focus upon retaining control.
- With permissive parenting, mothers and fathers are responsive, accepting, and warm, but avoid controlling or placing any demands upon children.
- Neglectful parents are not supportive, encouraging, responsive, or demanding; they are generally uninvolved.
- Authoritative parenting involves being responsive, demanding, and controlling, but not restrictive. There is active interest and participation, with open communication, trust, acceptance, and encouragement of autonomy, with awareness of a child's activities.

Roberts and Steinberg (1999) have stated that studies accomplished by Baumrind in the seventies have influenced the development of literature on parenting styles.

Ballantine (2001) has elaborated upon the various aspects of authoritative parenting. Parents should be both demanding and responsive, expecting children to adhere to demands. This behaviour should help children develop time-management and

decision-making skills. Parents are advised to be controlling but not restrictive, allowing some autonomy while controlling the situation. Children should be allowed to make some choices concerning their everyday affairs. Parents should be active participants in their children's lives. Open communication is also encouraged in authoritative parenting, with parents listening to the viewpoints of their children and asking for input in decision making. Trust, acceptance, and psychological autonomy are also factors in authoritative parenting. Parents should set a standard of expectation for children. Ballantine emphasises a reduction of physical punishment in parenting practices, seeing this as a parental opportunity to model problem-solving skills. Authoritative parenting sends the following messages: "We trust you to make good decisions, we are behind you, we will be there if you need us, you can talk to us about difficult situations, we will help you as you learn, and we expect you to do your best" (Ballantine, 2001, p. 47).

Sclafani (2004) has described authoritative parents as warm, involved, responsive, and allowing for input from children. Limits and standards are firmly communicated, and negative behaviour is confronted. He states that children are not equal with parents in power and control. Parents should not become involved in games of endless negotiation with children. Children are expected to be appropriately independent.

Ballantine (2001) has cited authoritative parenting as beneficial for both children and parents. Children become competent, socially developed, self-perceptive, and psychologically healthy; they also benefit from higher academic achievement. Parents have found their parenting task more rewarding.

Anderson (1999) has stated that some newly single mothers tend to tolerate negative behaviours. Mothers may become overly permissive, and inconsistent.

Children need predictability, stability, and security. She has suggested that single mothers may require help negotiating power, rules, and responsibilities, so that their authority is not compromised.

Goldman (2005), whose focus has been helping children through traumatic experiences, sees supportive parenting as empowering to children; a home should be a place of safety, nurturance, optimism, and respect. She feels that a sense of order will encourage feelings of security. Parents should model good behaviour, being honest about anxieties. She has suggested that parents look for opportunities to encourage values like compassion, empathy, and good solution-making.

Brooks (2005) has offered ten guideposts for good parenting practice, describing guideposts as scaffolding for a resilient mind-set.

- Empathy, the first guidepost, is not seen as agreement with the child, but as a validation of the child's viewpoint. It is suggested that parents are frequently unaware of their lack of empathy.
- The second guidepost of good parenting practice is practicing effective communication with active listening. The messages parents offer their children should help develop resilience. Parents should focus on strengths rather than weaknesses. They should allow children to express their feelings. Parents should be cognisant of their interactions and the messages they convey, judging whether or not they are teaching and modeling appropriate skills.
- The third good parenting guidepost suggests changing overused and negative scripts. If a strategy for helping children change is obviously ineffective, the script should be changed.

- Another parenting guidepost is helping children understand their worth, goodness, dignity, and security. Brooks suggests that parents spend time alone with individual children.
- The fifth suggested guidepost involves understanding children's temperament and accepting them as they are, but also developing appropriate goals and expectations.
- The sixth guidepost of good parenting practice is helping children acknowledge their problems, while identifying their strengths and areas of competence.
- The seventh guidepost states that parents need to help children develop a healthy attitude toward mistakes, by modeling good behaviour and treating children appropriately when they do make mistakes. Children should be encouraged to learn from their mistakes, not blame others, and to continue facing appropriate challenges.
- Brooks has also suggested that parents give children opportunities to be helpful. This not only acknowledges parental trust in the child, but it also builds responsibility and compassion in the child.
- The ninth guidepost is facilitating the development of problem solving skills and the ability to make decisions. Children should understand what they can and can not control, and they should be given opportunity to formulate different solutions to problems.
- The final guidepost suggested by Brooks is incorporation of disciplining methods that build self-discipline and self-worth. Parents should "ensure a safe and secure

environment in which children understand and can define rules, limits, and consequences” (Brooks, 2005, p. 311).

Discipline should be consistent, with understandable rules and consequences. Six key principles of discipline are offered by Brooks (2005):

- be preventative and proactive rather than reactive
- operate as a parental team
- be consistent but not inflexible
- decide upon the behaviours that merit discipline
- allow children to learn from consequences
- and offer approval for positive behaviour.

Although the parenting proposals offered by Brooks are not written specifically for families with divorced parents, the suggestions are developed to build resilience in children.

Grand-Parenting Interventions

Ahrons (2004) has suggested that a good divorce is one that does not destroy meaningful family relationships. Grandparent involvement can be a protective factor in the building of resilience in children following parental divorce (Lussier, Deater-Deckard, Dunn, & Davies, 2002). Grandparents can provide continuity, stability, and support; they can compensate for a stressed parent’s inability to meet the needs of their children. But involvement of grandparents can increase children’s risk levels. It is therefore, important for grandparents to approach this task knowledgeably.

Grandparents can experience emotional and physical health problems when there is loss of contact with their grandchildren following a divorce (Drew & Smith, 1999).

Grandparents can interpret this family transition as a heart-wrenching event and are typically left without counsel (Barth, 2004). Some studies have indicated an increase in contact following a divorce, but results have varied (Schutter & Scherman, 1997). In a study by Schutter and Scherman all of the grandparents and grandchildren participating in the survey desired an increase in relationship and activity.

The level of involvement a grandparent has with their grandchildren is related to a number of factors: kin position, gender of grandparent and custodial parent, and proximity (Hilton & Macari, 1997). A good relationship with children and children-in-law can predict a preservation of relationship with grandchildren (Schutter & Scherman, 1997). The best grandparenting relationships occur when there is a blood relationship with the custodial parent and when the grandparenting role is negotiated. Grandparents may feel angry towards their divorcing child for behaviours that may have led to the divorce, such as addictions or promiscuity (Barth, 2004). In this case, the grandparents should refrain from discussing the matter with grandchildren; they should attempt to be non-judgmental in the venting of their anger. Unresolved conflict that originated before the divorce will affect grandparent contact with grandchildren (Shutter & Scherman, 1997).

Grandparents indirectly facilitate their grandchildren's adaptation to the divorce by supporting the custodial parent (Shutter & Scherman, 1997). Help may be offered to the custodial parent in the form of monetary aid, or by offering advice, emotional support, or a place to stay. Parents of divorcing couples should attempt to create new relationships that are not only about the divorce (Barth, 2004). Grandparents should

make the role they wish to fill clear to their children, setting the boundaries for their relationships with their grandchildren to avoid guilty feelings.

Results from a study, accomplished by Ruiz and Silverstein (2004), indicated that negative psychological effects of parental divorce were ameliorated by “affectual solidarity with grandparents” (p. 1). Grandparent involvement can buffer grandchildren from outcomes such as depression; evidence indicates this protective effect continues into adulthood. Henderson (2003) investigated the relationship between the positive outcomes, of competence and self-efficacy, and attachment to grandparents, finding a protective factor in attachment, particularly to maternal grandmothers. Harris (1996) found 61% of survey respondents reported that their grandparents had made a significant difference, with maternal grandmothers being most helpful. Maternal grandparents tended to provide a sense of unconditional love and protection, and they were more likely to teach values. 82% of families in one study reported accessing grandparents with concerns and worries (Lussier et al., 2002). Children reported confiding in grandparents immediately following the divorce, with grandparents continuing to be a source for intimate disclosure.

Grandparents can become caregivers, playmates, friends, or storytellers (Lussier et al., 2002). They can serve as advocates, mentors and advisors. Evidence has indicated that children do emulate characteristics of grandparents when the relationship is characterized as mentoring. Care-giving can include babysitting as well as provision of transportation and recreational activities (Schutter & Scherman, 1997). Grandparents can provide great emotional support by listening, giving advice, and offsetting a child’s sense of loss. “Grandparents can play a particular role, especially if their marriages are intact:

symbolic generational continuity and living proof to children that relationships can be lasting, reliable, and dependable” (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1996, p. 111).

Continued contact with grandchildren is important, with attendance at special events and gift giving (Schutter & Scherman, 1997). Barth (2004) has suggested keeping in touch by telephone or e-mail, making videos, taking pictures, making cassette recordings, and putting scrapbooks together. For grandparents whose children are not custodial parents, it is particularly important that they use communication methods and that they pay close attention to grandchildren’s interests and activities.

Grandparents are seen as transmitters of family history and culture (Lussier et al, 2002). They can teach traditions like languages, or they can take grandchildren to church or synagogue (Schutter & Scherman, 1997). Routines and rituals can provide comfort, structure, and continuity for children. Activities like holidays, and family meals should not be abandoned (Anderson, 1999). At a time when life can appear unpredictable, grandparents can help by continuing established rituals and by setting new rituals that fit the new family structure (Lussier et al., 2004). Grandfathers can offer grandchildren their wisdom and expertise (Shutter & Scherman, 1997).

Intervention: Educational Resources

Cookston, Braver, Sandler, & Genalo (2002) state the following:

Family courts have become more committed to providing educational programming aimed at improving the experience of divorcing parents and their children. These programs tend to cover a wide range of topics, including the stress of inter-parental conflict for children, children’s reactions to divorce, negative effects of badmouthing the other parent to the child, dispute resolution

options, and topics focused at improving the well-being of children following the divorce of their parents. (p. 189)

Educational programs have tended to fall into three general categories: programs for parents to engender good parenting skills, programs for children that facilitate positive developmental well-being, and programs for divorcing individuals to encourage parental recovery from divorce. Not all programs are offered free of charge to the public and not all are accessible to all interested parties. Braver, Salem, Pearson, and DeLuse (1996) included 102 divorce education programs in their survey of program content, which is an indication of the number of programs in North America. The respondents of this 1996 study were attending a congress in Chicago, Illinois.

Alberta has been the only Canadian province with a mandated parenting after separation program. Programs provided by individual provinces within Canada can be found on various web-sites.

A Sample Parenting Program

The content of one program is briefly examined in this final section of the literature review. This program is measured against the knowledge collected in the literature review. This section offers an example of how the knowledge gained in this thesis can be useful to program planners and evaluators of educational material to improve the content of programs.

One program that is currently in use is the *Parenting after Separation* program mandated by the Province of Alberta. The program was developed by the departments of Alberta Justice, Alberta Children's Services, and The Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta. The following information was obtained from the participant manual for this parenting

program (*Parenting after Separation*, 2004). Because I was given permission to attend this program, personal observations are added in this portion of the literature review.

The proposed purpose of the workshop is to “assist parents in understanding the process and effects of separation and divorce and to encourage parents to make positive choices about how they will continue to parent their children after separation” (*Parenting after Separation*, 2004, p.1). The workshop objectives are as follows: to provide information (on the effects of divorce, legal issues, good parenting, and the use of mediation), to encourage development of an effective parenting plan (which is an agreement on issues related to the children), and to promote mediation (a voluntary process of involving a neutral party when negotiating a parenting plan is too difficult for couples). The two instructors of the parenting workshop, particularly the lawyer, were clear in directing couples away from court procedures and towards mediation.

The *Parenting after Separation* program was a one-day workshop, about five to six hours in length. The workshop participants were given a manual, which outlined the general format of the workshop and summarized the information to be presented by the instructors. The manual was divided into eight sections, with the first section focusing on relationship building. It introduced attachment, triangulation, and child alienation. The instructors of the workshop discussed the issues presented in the manual. To demonstrate the information offered in the manual a video segment visually presented scenarios of behaviours that are destructive. The literature review of this thesis does verify these issues as important knowledge.

The second section of the manual looked at how divorce can affect parents, and included discussion on the stages of separation and issues surrounding the separation

process (including grief pathways). This section also included information on shared parenting, parallel parenting, starting over, the blended family, and step-parenting. Although I did not track the duration of time spent on each section during the workshop I attended, it did appear as if less time was spent on this section. As parental adjustment to divorce has been cited in the literature review as affecting child development, the content of this section would appear appropriate to the parenting workshop.

The information provided in the manual on the third section was brief (two and one quarter pages), but the workshop instructor did spend more time elaborating upon the information. This section involved instruction on communication skills. It presented destructive parental interactions and scenarios of inappropriate communication with children, such as criticizing the other parent in the presence of a child. Again, a video segment was included in the workshop. The literature review of this thesis has illustrated that parental behaviour and interaction can affect resilience and outcomes in children. Inclusion of this issue is therefore a very important aspect of a parenting program. Both sections one and three focused on inappropriate parental behaviour and communication.

Section four of the manual (sixteen pages in length) offered instruction on the effects that divorce can have on children. Lessons in this section included an understanding of children's feelings and needs, as well as the typical reactions of children towards the divorce. This section also listed typical behaviours that can be expected at different ages, and the range of reactions to divorce that children may exhibit at various developmental stages. The instructor of the workshop offered further details. Inclusion of this information was appropriate to a parenting class; it is similar to the information presented in pages 13 to 19 of the literature review.

The fifth section in the *Parenting after Separation* manual discussed legal issues, which is one of the goals of this program. The manual divided this section into the following subjects: guardianship, custody, access, and child support. Section six of the parenting manual presented justification for, and instructions for, the development of a parenting plan, which is an agreement between parents stating how the children will be raised. The seventh section of the manual looked at mediation, which involved the attempted resolution of issues such as custody, parenting arrangement, financial support, and property division through the involvement of a mediator. The eighth section in the *Parenting after Separation* manual presented the option of Collaborative Family Law, which is “problem solving with collaborative lawyers where . . . [couples] . . . try to understand each other” (2004, p.61). Legal issues, formal parenting plans, mediation, and Collaborative Family Law have not been discussed in the literature review of this thesis.

The final section, which I do not recall being referred to during the seminar, offered a list of suggested readings for both parents and children. Three of the authors suggested on this list have been referenced to a number of times in this thesis, Constance Ahrons, Sharlene Wolchik, and Judith Wallerstein. To determine if the books listed in the manual were available to parents, I searched the shelves of the local Chapters bookstore. Without the help of an attendant I was able to find only one adult book from the list and one other suggested author who had written another book on the subject of divorce. I asked a bookseller about the books on the list and was told that the store only stocks books that are in demand. This bookseller told me that he has not had parents requesting books on this subject, but that he has had children asking for books that could

help them. He identified two or three children's books from the list that had been stocked at the local store.

The program content does appear to meet the program objectives, but a formal evaluation of the program is beyond the perimeters of this thesis. It should be noted that the audience was captive; this is a mandated program. The participants were offered a manual, handout material, lectures, and video segments. Again, an evaluation of this educational program is beyond the perimeters of this thesis. Braver, Salem, Pearson, and DeLuse (1996) have stated the following:

[It may be possible] that voluntary programs are designed for parents who are already trying to make decisions and behave in ways that are beneficial to their children . . . require help in mastering the skills. . . . Mandatory programs, however, are designed for a more diverse audience, including highly conflictual. . . . Many of these parents require basic information. . . . Some may also require the motivation to act accordingly. (p. 56)

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Study Design

The literature review undertaken in this thesis was conducted for the purpose of informing educators of the impact that divorce may have on children, of possible factors contributing to resiliency in children of divorce, and of possible intervention efforts. It stands as supporting evidence that the social issue of parental divorce is significant enough to provoke the interest and involvement of educators.

The research component of the thesis continues the exploration of this issue. This exploratory research adds to our understanding of the subject, by the examining the reflective experiences, past and present, of adults who have experienced parental divorce as children (Babbie, 2005).

Development of the Questionnaire

The study design began with the creation of the survey instrument. As proposed, the purpose of this survey was to collect qualitative data concerning the personal experience of adults whose parents divorced during their childhood years. The questions, which were both close-ended and open-ended, asked for demographic information and the recall of childhood emotions and behaviours; they also offered participants the opportunity to present advice and words of wisdom.

The survey questions (see pp. 134-137) were based upon the information obtained in the literature review. A number of questions asked for information concerning emotional and behavioural responses at the time of parental separation and in the years following the experience. The participants were also asked to recall living arrangements

and the effect that divorce had on their relationships with their parents. Survey participants were asked to offer their perception of the parenting skills demonstrated by their parents, with particular interest in how their parents prepared them for the divorce. They were asked to recall interventions which may have come from outside their immediate family. The participants were also directed to examine their adult relationships.

A late change was made to the survey introduction. Following a response from a potential participant, it was determined that parental separation, rather than parental divorce, occurred in childhood. Feed-back from potential participants indicated that parental divorce often occurred many years following the initial separation. The literature review did not look specifically at the duration of the separation period of divorcing couples, but researchers did on occasion begin observation of participants from the time the children first learned about the impending divorce of their parents.

Process of Sample Selection and Recruitment of Participants

It was originally proposed that recruitment of participants would occur in the following ways: personal invitation to participate, invitation offered in response to referrals, notices on bulletin boards, notices on internet sources, and advertisements in newspapers. Adults 21 years of age or older, who had experienced parental divorce before age 18 and who were able to retrieve and affix attachments to e-mail messages, would be invited to participate. Five to fifteen participants were expected to return the survey questionnaires. The intended sample population would not be selected to represent the entire population of individuals who had experienced parental divorce because the purpose of the research was exploratory.

As intended, recruitment advertisements were posted at various venues in the writer's community: Red Deer College, Red Deer Family Services, The Golden Circle, and the neighbourhood Green Apple hairdressing shop. These recruitment advertisements, which included my home phone number, asked qualifying individuals to call for confidentiality information and delivery of a survey questionnaire via e-mail. The advertisements at these venues did not generate potential participants. Recruitment advertisements, which included my home phone number and my e-mail address, were then posted on the bulletin boards of three local churches. The advertisement was also sent to fellow graduate students through e-mail. These recruitment advertisements also failed to generate participants for the study.

Having mentioned this project to various individuals, I had collected the names of a number of possible participants. Because a few of the potential participants were unable to retrieve or send e-mail attachments, some of the survey questionnaires were delivered in person. Survey participants included at least one individual who had experienced parental separation at age 19. All of the participants were recruited by me or my son.

Survey results were sent to my e-mail address or personally collected. About half of the participants returned their questionnaire via e-mail. One participant asked for my help in answering the questionnaire. I accommodated this participant by summarizing her statements and reading the answers back for their confirmation.

Feed-back from participants indicated that some individuals would have preferred an informal interview rather than having to face the task of completing a questionnaire. They suggested that it would have been easier to talk about their experience, rather than

having to narrow it down to a few statements. Participants did not appear reluctant to share their experiences; some were eager to help with the research of this subject, but there did appear to be a reluctance to focus on the completion of a written questionnaire. This reluctance may account for the lack of response to the posted recruitment advertisements. Perhaps the response might have been positive had participants been asked to give an interview. This subject may have been too personal for the format of a survey.

Returned surveys were saved in print form, and on computer disk and hard drive. The names were removed from the survey data before analysis began. Eleven surveys were returned and all were included in the data.

Following the compilation of the survey data, three potential participants answered the recruitment advertisements, which had not been removed. Two responded from different church advertisements, and one responded in answer to the Red Deer College advertisement. These participants did not return their surveys.

The eleven participants for this study were selected on the basis of a non-probability, purposive sampling procedure. They were a population selected because they represent a particular group of individuals. This study sample does not represent the complete population of individuals who have experienced parental divorce.

This thesis research serves as a pilot study of possible outcomes and experiences of parental separation and divorce. The experiences of this group of individuals are compared with data collected from published works.

Methodology of Data Analysis

The data collected in this thesis research was analyzed by application of a modified form of the grounded theory method (GTM) of qualitative research. Three of the major books that present the methodology and processes of grounded theory, that were used as guides, are as follows: *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967); *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (1990); and *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (1998).

GTM was originally developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss during their study of terminally ill patients (Creswell, 2005). These two researchers wanted an inductive methodology that would allow them to generate theory from the perspective of their participants and allowed them to listen closely to the ideas of participants.

The evolution of grounded theory has not progressed without controversy and discord. Walker and Myrick (2006) have explored the processes and procedures of grounded theory offering a complicated comparison of how the two originators have varied in the development of their approaches to coding, conceptualizing, developing the dimensions and properties of categories, and generating theory. They state that “the similar use of language, together with the timing of procedures, is confusing to follow” (p. 556). LaRossa (2005) has added, “Apart from the fact that GTM guidelines can be opaque and confusing, there is also a war of sorts being fought among different GTM interpreters” (p. 1).

The controversy has not deterred the use of this method of qualitative research. Numerous research studies have applied grounded theory in various modified forms. LaRossa (2005) states that family scholars rely on grounded theory methods, and that the grounded theory approach is central to family studies. Creswell (2005), in his book on educational research, states that grounded theory “appeals to a wide range of educational researchers” (p. 395).

Helmeke and Sprenkle (2000) applied the method of grounded theory to generate themes concerning couples therapy; “grounded theory methodology was used to discover and identify key themes and patterns...and to guide the emergent process of generating hypotheses or assertions regarding pivotal moments” (p. 471). Spector, Greely, and Kingsley (2004) applied grounded theory methodology to generate suggestions for creating a science teacher education program. Wuest, Ford-Gilboe, Merritt-Gray, and Lemire (2006) implemented GTM to generate a theoretical understanding of the relationship between child custody policies and women’s health issues. They suggested that this research approach is helpful in aiding the understanding of human behaviour. These researchers collected data, compared data, and generated hypotheses concerning concepts and relationships.

Fassinger (2005) used grounded theory in research which examined issues in the area of counselling psychology. She proposed that, “theory is derived inductively through an iterative, concurrent process of data collection, coding, conceptualizing and theorizing, wherein new data are constantly compared to emerging concepts until no new themes, categories or relationships are being discovered” (pp. 2-3). In a study exploring the attitudes of religious leaders on marriage, divorce, and intimate partner violence,

Levitt and Ware (2006) used a grounded theory process “to develop ideas to guide future research and to generate conceptualizations ‘grounded’ within participant experience” (p. 214).

Each of these research studies used a modification of the GTM. As Strauss and Corbin (1990) state, “while we set these procedures and techniques before you, we do not at all wish to imply rigid adherence to them” (p.59). According to these research developers, “Insight and understanding about a phenomenon increase as you interact with your data. This comes from collecting and asking questions about the data, making comparisons, thinking about what you see, making hypotheses, developing small theoretical frameworks (minframeworks) about concepts and their relationships” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 43).

Creswell (2005) has suggested that there are three dominant types of grounded theory designs: systematic design, emerging design, and constructivist design. The emerging design type of grounded theory was primarily utilized in the context of this thesis research. This design arose from Glaser’s critique of Strauss and Corbin’s over-emphasis on rules, procedures, and diagrams. According to Creswell (2005), Glaser saw grounded theory as a means for the author or researcher to explain a “basic social process”. This is accomplished by constant comparison. “Constant comparison is an inductive (from specific to broad) data analysis procedure in grounded theory research of generating and connecting categories by comparing incidents in the data to other incidents, incidents to categories, and categories to other categories” (Creswell, 2005, p. 406). “By carefully inducing the theory from a substantive area, it will fit the realities in the eyes of participants . . . explain the variations in behaviour of participants . . . (have)

relevance . . . (and) should be modified when new data are present” (Creswell, 2005, p. 402). The systematic design of GTM was also minimally incorporated into this analysis. This design, which is associated with Strauss and Corbin rather than Glaser, allows the researcher to use all data collected to create initial categories (Creswell, 2004). In an e-mail response John Creswell states that, “Systematic means that the approach is highly structured. Strauss and Corbin, for example, use predetermined categories in axial coding (causal conditions, strategies, etc), they also have a prescribed structure for coding – open, axial, selective. It is a highly structured, systematic procedure for conducting a grounded theory study.”

The purpose of my analysis was to create statements concerning the reflective experience of parental divorce. The hypotheses, which were created from a close examination and comparison of numerous personal incidents, fit the realities of my participants and offer explanations of their varying behaviours. These hypotheses are flexible, open to alternative interpretation as new data emerges.

Analysis involved organizing data, creating categories, citing incidents, and structuring hypotheses. The answers offered in response to the questions represent the data to be questioned and compared. The raw data collected from all the surveys were brought together and organized. The answers to some questions were pasted together so that all the data gained from those questions could be compared. Also, particular answers are attached to demographic details.

Within the context of this thesis and as systematic design would allow, the categories were sometimes constructed from the questions asked in the survey instrument. The incidents, which were conveyed, as much as possible, in the

participants' own words, include the following: descriptions of emotions or behaviours, events in their lives, or statements of advice. Hypotheses were formulated following various comparisons of categories and incidents.

The following is an example of the process of analysis. Having examined the data, two categories were created: participants' immediate emotions and thoughts, and age at time of divorce. The incidents in these categories were collected and examined. A question developed concerning how age affected initial reaction to divorce. In this case, the two categories were compared. Age at time of separation was attached to, or pasted adjacent to, initial reaction. The reactions of each age group were compared for commonalities and differences. Then reactions at various ages were compared for commonalities and differences. From this comparison, a hypothesis was constructed.

Because this thesis is a pilot project to inspire future research and the development of educational material, analysis of the data culminates with the creation of hypotheses concerning the experiences or impressions of parental divorce. This approach is similar to a study accomplished by Larson (1996). In his study of classroom discussions, Larson used the emerging design of grounded theory to write a 'theory in-process' concerning teachers' conceptions of classroom discussions. His hypotheses were grounded in the collected data. The hypotheses were "tentative, pending additional rounds of data gathering and analysis. . . . [they] provide an additional layer of understanding" (Larson, 1996, p. 9).

The findings concerning the reflective experiences of parental divorce are presented in the Data Collection and Analysis section of this thesis. Categories were introduced, discovered incidents were revealed, and emerging hypotheses statements

were made. Because the term hypothesis is generally associated with quantitative studies, statements drawn from the data are not referred to as hypothesis but as statements or findings. In the Conclusion section of this thesis, the findings drawn from the qualitative research are compared to the literature review.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Collection and Analysis

Demographics of Study Participants

The following tables (tables 2-6) provide an overview of the demographics of the individuals who responded to the survey.

Table 2

Age of Survey Participants

<u>Age</u>	<u>Number of Participants</u>
21-29	5
30-35	0
36-40	1
+ 40	5

Table 3

Gender of Participants

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Number of Participants</u>
Female	9
Male	2

Table 4

Highest Education Obtained by Participants

<u>Education</u>	<u>Number of Participants</u>
High school	3
Some post-secondary	5
University degree	2
Post-graduate degree	1

Table 5

Present Occupation of Participants

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number of Participants</u>
Homemaker	4
Student	2
Retired	1
Special Care Aid	1
Minister	1
Music teacher	1
Pastor/construction	1

Table 6

Age of Participants at Time of Parental Separation

<u>Age</u>	<u>Number of Participants</u>
2	1
8	1
9	1
11	1
12	1
13	2
14	1
17	2
19	1

The participants for this study were selected on the basis of a non-probability, purposive sampling. They were a population selected because they belong to a particular group of individuals. The participants were not selected with the intention of diversity or to represent the attitude of all members of that group of individuals. Although recruitment advertisements were posted, the individuals participating in this research study were approached by the researcher or a representative of the researcher. Therefore, this study sample does not represent the complete population of individuals who have experienced parental divorce. It was not a random sample of individuals.

The statements drawn from the analysis of the data collected from this population may not be generalized to the entire population, but this does not detract from the significance of the statements made by the participants of this study. Each participant has offered reflective accounts of his/her experiences.

Categories, Incidents, and Findings

This section describes the process of naming categories, revealing incidents, and formulating statements or suggested findings from the data. As Strauss and Corbin state, “understanding about a phenomenon increase(s) as you interact with your data . . . asking questions . . . making comparisons, thinking about what you see, making hypotheses” (1990, p. 43). Grounded theory, “involves the constant comparative coding procedures of comparing incident to incident, incident to category, and category to category” (Creswell, 2005, pg. 401).

To better demonstrate Strauss and Corbin’s process of asking questions, making comparisons, and formulating statements about the reflective experience of individuals, some sections of this chapter are written in first person, present tense. Because the term hypothesis is generally associated with quantitative studies, statements drawn from the data are not referred to as hypotheses but as statements or findings from the data. The participants are frequently described as they were when parental separation occurred. For example, an adult who experienced parental separation when he/she were seven may be referred to as a seven-year-old participant. Wherever possible, the exact words or phrases offered by the participants are incorporated into the narrative. Sometimes a generalizing word is used to describe the incidents or ideas being expressed by the

participants. For clarification of survey questions, the complete survey instrument can be found in the appendix.

Describing the emerging design of GTM, Creswell (2005) states that “the researcher builds a theory and discusses the relationship among categories without reference to a diagram or picture” (p. 402). The analysis of my data is presented in discussion narrative form.

Participants’ Immediate Emotions and Thoughts

I began analysis by exploring the words and phrases used by the participants to describe the day they realized their parents were separating. With the exception of one participant who described the day as surreal and two others who did not remember the day, the words used to describe the day are descriptions of their emotional state.

Participants described what they were feeling and thinking at the time. The descriptive words were therefore referred to as descriptions of immediate emotions and thoughts.

The first *category* became: participants’ immediate emotions and thoughts.

Bringing together the words offered by the participants, I found that disbelief was prevalent in their descriptions. Other descriptive words are shock, sadness, and devastation. One seventeen-year-old expressed relief.

Age at Separation, and Immediate Emotions and Thoughts

I questioned the relationship between these descriptive words and the age that participants were at the time of parental separation. A *category* was created: age at separation. This category was compared to the previous category.

Words used by children over fourteen include the following: sadness, alone, relief, shocked, desperate, and disbelief. The descriptive words and phrases of children

twelve to fourteen included the following: anxious, upset, devastated, didn't accept, and do not remember. Words used by children under ten included: heart broken, insecure, confused, disillusioned, sad, devastated, shocked, and too young to realize.

Findings

There does not appear to be a distinct difference in the words and phrases used by different developmental age groups, though there may be more disbelief in children age twelve and over. The survey does indicate that participants of all ages felt the emotions of sadness or confusion. The memory of these emotions generally remained salient.

Parental Preparation, and Immediate Emotions and Thoughts

I compared these descriptive words to the participants' accounts of how their parents informed them of an impending separation. A new *category* was created: parental preparation. This category was compared to participants' immediate emotions and behaviours.

One nine-year-old participant stated that there was no talking, implying that her parents did not inform her. She then stated that on the day of separation she was devastated, shocked, and didn't understand. A fourteen-year-old participant stated that it was talked about for some time prior to the separation, and used the words excited, anxious, and upset. Another fourteen-year-old stated that her mom had made threats about leaving, but also described the day by stating that she didn't accept it (the separation) and thought it would blow over. Similarly, a seventeen-year-old participant recalled disbelief though stated that the parental relationship was turbulent. A participant, who was eight at the time, stated that the announcement was made to the

children in a calm manner, but this individual also described confusion and disillusionment.

Findings

According to the reflections collected from this group of participants, parental efforts to prepare children were generally minimal. Pre-separation discussions appeared to offer little help in aiding children through the initial stages of separation. Dropping hints of unhappiness and conflict did not generally prepare children for separation.

Emotional and Behavioural Evolution

I questioned the process of change in the children's behaviour and emotional well-being, from their first descriptions of emotions and behaviours to later behaviours, as they are indicated through the participants' responses to various questions. I looked, in particular, at the incidents that are described in the answers to the following questions:

- What was your immediate response (physical, emotional, and behavioural) to your parents' separation?
- How would you describe your behaviour and emotional well-being in the years following your parents' separation and divorce?
- What would you have liked your parents to have known about you and your emotions during the early years of their divorce?
- What words would you use to describe your romantic relationships in the past; and if applicable, to describe your present romantic relationships?

The *category* was: emotional and behavioural evolution. This category was a combination of immediate emotional and behavioural responses, behavioural responses in the years following parental divorce, and possible adult responses. But I did keep in

mind that clues to adult reactive behaviours may be indicated in their discussions of adult romantic relationships and in their descriptions of how they respond in confrontational situations.

I began with the youngest participant, who at the age of two did not remember anything about the divorce event. The primary emotional memory, or incident, offered by this participant was a curiosity, or fascination, about paternal identity. This participant also recalled feeling ashamed of her mother. It is possible that emotions were expressed in this participant's description of what a romantic partner should provide; in this case the word respect was used in the description. In offering advice, this participant suggested that a good partner would be someone who cares to get to know who you really are. Again, it is possible that this statement is a reflection of an emotional desire to have known the father.

The eight-year-old participant offered a better description of both feelings and behaviours. Insecurity, confusion, sadness, and heart brokenness were felt initially. The immediate behavioural outcome was to cry; detachment and depression followed in later years. The participant described being a loner and having the occasional thought of suicide; attention was sought and efforts made to fit in. The participant included the word security in the description of positive adult relationships.

A nine-year-old participant described feeling shocked, devastated, numb and confused. The participant initially withdrew, and later became angry and hateful, with drug and alcohol use. Similarly, an eleven-year-old participant, who could not recall the day of parental separation, offered an extreme description of later behaviour. This individual was very angry, hurt, sometimes depressed, and had thoughts of suicide. The

participant admitted that as an adult she has felt concern about being left when in the middle of a marital disagreement.

A twelve-year-old survey participant described emotional denial and numbness, which left the individual feeling emotionally on their own and unable to bring order to the upheavals of adolescence.

One of the two thirteen-year-olds described the day as the worst of her life, responding behaviourally by screaming and sobbing. She tended to later crave male attention and felt like a victim. The other participant who was thirteen at the time of parental separation reported less initial trauma, but during her later teen years felt rejected and abandoned. This participant was unique in that she was left to live on her own to complete her final two years of high school. She also disclosed a past divorce.

A fourteen-year-old participant described a progression from disbelief and sobbing to feeling scarred, abandoned, and very angry. She described herself as hurting and suffering. This participant stated that the feelings of abandonment and anger primarily occurred between the age of 18 and 20; this age period was particularly difficult.

One of the two seventeen-year-olds reported an extreme emotional response. Citing the emotions as unmanageable, the participant described anger, withdrawal, anxiety, sleeping problems, and panic. This individual noted a problem with trust and felt trapped, angry, and frustrated in early adult relationships. The other seventeen-year-old felt relief along with sadness and a sense of loss. This participant reported feeling emotionally down as well as feeling the responsibility of supporting the mother. A similar response was reported by the nineteen-year-old. This participant recalled being

placed in the middle of everything, and feeling as though she was acting as the protector and advisor. The response was to withdraw from the family.

It was important to keep in mind that other complications may have been present in the lives of these children that also contributed to their behaviours. Parental separation may have been just one element among many or it may have been the initiating factor in a progression of negative behaviours and emotions. But the participants, themselves, have recalled these behaviours as related to the divorce and separation of their parents, as if they themselves associate their behaviours with parental divorce.

Findings

Based on the data presented it can be stated that, although behavioural and emotional responses varied greatly, at some point following the separation of their parents, most participants responded negatively, sometimes both emotionally and behaviourally, but more often emotionally. It does appear as if emotional and behavioural responses may accelerate during the later teen years and early adult years more so than in the early teen years. Not all children reached their peak of emotional and behavioural response immediately following the separation. The behavioural and emotional responses of the children in this sample group, have illustrated that parental divorce has a profound effect on the individuals who experience it.

Individual Compensational Efforts

As I explored the previous category the following question arose: what did the children do to compensate for the fragmentation of their family unit? Some participants indicated resilient behaviours that proved to be temporary; others described resilient

behaviours that appeared enduring. Some of the compensational efforts were negative rather than resilient in nature. The *category* was: individual compensational efforts.

Before I developed this category, I did not make the assumption of fragmentation of the family unit. Words and phrases used by the participants to indicate a fragmentation of the family unit included the following.

- cut-off
- no contact
- not seeing my dad as often... move with my mom...650 km away
- abandoned
- never knew him alive
- left me to fend for myself
- she felt finished raising her children when she left
- my mother left so I felt betrayed by her
- dad's lifestyle was not appropriate... he did not wish to have us live with him...
mom spent much of her time in self pity
- a year later she moved away and my family was further divided
- my father could not afford or would not afford a room for my siblings and I

I examined incidents describing efforts the participants used to compensate for family fragmentation. A thirteen-year-old participant described initial efforts to fit-in at her new school and make new friends. These efforts were rewarded; she made new friends, improved her self confidence, and excelled in sports, music, and school. This resilient behaviour did not continue following the next residential move. She felt bullied

and rejected. Another thirteen-year-old sought male attention to compensate; she also sought help from her church.

A fourteen-year-old participant put her energy into friends and athletics, which she speculated delayed the effects of the separation until she was 18. She stated that involvement in sports at a competitive level helped her let out the anger, frustration, tears, and pain. She stated that in later years she started to get plugged into her church, and that God and godly friendships helped her deal with bitterness. A twelve-year-old participant also stated that relationships through school, church, and sports became significant sources of encouragement. Another eleven-year-old participant appears to have compensated by watching a lot of television.

An eight-year-old participant wished that there had been income that would have allowed her access to athletics. She described her fantasy parents, who provided security in her life by allowing her to spend time with them. A nine-year-old participant fell into drug and alcohol use. The two-year-old participant appears to have fantasized about a father. One seventeen-year-old sought adult nurturing, taking advice from her aunt and her pastor. The nineteen-year-old participant also accepted an aunt as a confidant.

Although the participants were not asked directly how they compensated for the disruption in their family, most did offer some explanation of their efforts to carry-on with life.

Findings

The data suggests that children experiencing parental divorce may search out ways to make their lives happier or to detach themselves from family problems as means of compensating for the fragmentation of their families.

Intervention Positives and Negatives

Some of the incidents used in the intervention categories were drawn from the following questions.

- How, if at all, did your extended family (e.g.: grandparents, aunts, uncles) help you following the separation?
- How, if at all, did your community (e.g.: neighbours, teachers, school, sporting groups, churches) help you following the separation?
- How could your extended family and community have better helped you during this period of your life?

I questioned how extended family and community can help children in this situation. What intervention behaviours were seen as positive, and what actions and attitudes were interpreted as negative? The *category* was: intervention positives and negatives.

Positive incidents of extended family interventions were related by the participants. Statements made by the participants included the following.

- one aunt actually became what I think a mother should be and what I wish my mother was: a listener and a role model...my closest confidant
- my auntie was my rock...solid advice...forward perspective...kept me thinking about the future and how hard times are only for a season...encouraged me to always love my mom
- an uncle and aunt role modelled a healthy adult marriage
- a close aunt that I loved dearly allowed me over on weekends

- grandmother was the most important person (although she was just being a normal grandma, not doing anything extraordinary), she showed that not everyone and everything in the world would hurt, she was my hope

Statements about extended families that were negative or resigned in nature included the following.

- we had no extended family in Canada...we were used to it
- grandmother provided a home for us...she did no 'mothering'
- didn't feel that any of my extended family helped me...as though they were sorry for me...avoided the situation...didn't know what to say or how to deal with it
- just avoided the whole thing...people don't know what to say
- extended family does not have a great history
- told me that I was being silly for being upset
- not one of them did anything

Statements about friends included the following.

- God and godly friendships are what helped me deal with my bitterness
- it was my four best friends that were there for me...closer to them than I am to my own mother
- my friends didn't understand...never experienced anything like that...their parents are still together
- close friends of ours... experienced challenges... still together... I have enjoyed watching them care for each other... fantasy parents... provided security

Statements about community included the following.

- people had a certain negative perception re: divorced families...church rejected me...some people apologized and admitted they were wrong
- the church was supportive, but at the same time everyone felt sorry for me
- one pastor and his wife...always called me to see how I was doing...breakfast...hear me out...never too busy... God-parents...BIG support...listened and prayed with me
- irregular in church attendance... no support there...don't think school realized...no support there...just moved...didn't have relationships with our neighbours
- relationships through school, church, and sports...significant source of encouragement...building my self-esteem

Some suggestions offered by the participants to extended family, friends, and community included the following.

- (family) should have stayed involved and let the children know that they care
- nice of them (friends) to have just listened to my concerns
- would have helped to see them (family) keep their own marriages together
- being a little more compassionate, caring, and understanding...rather than assuming stereotyping
- should have told me that I was allowed to be mad and sad
- periodic contact...would have been meaningful

Findings

Although some of the participants recalled positive interventions, others appeared somewhat angry or frustrated over the perceived absence of constructive intervention. The reflections of this group of participants would suggest that they did desire positive intervention, regardless of whether or not they received intervention from outside their immediate family. The participants suggested that interventions could include compassion, caring, listening, positive role-modelling, and community activities.

Parent/Child Relationships and Perception of Divorce Responsibility

The previous category involved relationships outside the family; I then moved to relationships within the family unit. I was told by one participant that I should have included a question about sibling relationships, as this was her source of strength. Despite the fact that I did not directly ask about sibling relationships, statements made by the participants included the following: sisters were already in a different city going to college; being the oldest child...acting as the mother to my younger sisters; I went after him (brother) and joined him for the rest of the evening (following announcement of separation); my sister...basically disowned the family; had a lot of conflict with my brother.

The participants were asked directly about their relationships with their mothers and fathers, at the time of separation and four years later. The *category* created to explore this dynamic was: parent/child relationships. Although I did not ask the participants to explain the reasons why their parents divorced, some participants did offer this information. I questioned the relationship between a child's attitude towards a particular parent and whether or not the child saw that parent as responsible for the

divorce. Another *category* was created: perception of divorce responsibility (or fault). As I examined the category of parent/child relationship I compared this information to the category of divorce responsibility.

The two-year-old participant did not remember her early impressions of parental relationships, but poignantly stated that she was ashamed of her mother and only saw her father in his coffin. An interesting demographic detail related to this participant was her occupation, which was described as retired. This would indicate that the participant was perhaps the oldest in my group. The divorce event may have happened in the nineteen-forties.

The eight-year-old participant stated that she was always very close to her mother and still is. She also described her relationship with her father as very good, relating that she had a special relationship with him and that he loved taking her to construction sites. But she also stated that as an adult she sees that they made selfish decisions, that her dad's lifestyle of promiscuity was his priority, and that her mom spent much of her time in self pity. She stated that living with her mother meant that there was no income to justify extra activities (such as sports), but that her father invested in a summer cottage in an effort to keep the family together. The participant indirectly suggested that her dad was responsible for the divorce, but that does not appear to be a strong factor in her relationship with him. I would suggest that this participant has been able to overlook some aspects of the parental relationship and continued to feel close to both of her parents. The participant advised others to remember that parents are human and not perfect...the pain will go away and harmony will come back.

One participant stated that she has always had a close relationship with her mother, but that parental morals changed at one point, which led to a change in the participant's personality. She turned to drugs and alcohol. She stated that she was cut-off from her father and had no contact with him.

Another participant stated that her relationship with her mother has always been very strained, but that her mother tried very hard to be a good single parent, sometimes she tried too hard and they got hurt. She stated that her relationship with her father was almost non-existent; she saw him maybe once a month. This participant offered some explanation for why she feels this way about her parental relationships. Her statements included the following: she (mom) often spoke poorly of my father and he of her; it was like a competition to see who could get our love, my dad's strategy was to use money; my mother used negative enforcement and very little positive enforcement. This participant offered her age; she likely is the youngest participant involved in this research.

One participant stated that he rarely saw his father, but when he did it was like nothing had happened. In describing his relationship with his mother, he stated that he wanted less and less to do with her, which only intensified as years went on. Another participant felt the need to be supportive of the mother, while at the same time felt isolated from the father, as there was virtually no contact during the initial years of separation. There was recognition of how incapable the parents were. This participant had no doubt that the father was responsible for the divorce.

One of the thirteen-year-old participants described a gradual deterioration of the relationship that existed between her and her mother. At first they talked and

communicated well; she described her mother as strong, confident, and someone she admired. But a second and third residential move brought strain to the relationship. Her perception of her mother changed in later years. This participant was told by her mother that she could return, on her own, to their previous residence. Still the participant blamed her own teenage hormones, as well as her mother's illness, for the strained relationship. She stated that she missed-out on advice and wisdom that only a parent can offer. This individual felt that she had a fairly good relationship with her father, seeing him very regularly at first. She described him as even tempered, kind, and caring, though she felt that he favoured her brother. The data indicate that this participant did feel her mother was responsible for the divorce. She stated that her mom said it was lack of communication, her father's work, and her mother's need for more education.

Another thirteen-year-old described her mother as verbally abusive, but stated that their relationship was later patched up with God's help. She described a relationship with her father that varied through the years, having a rough spell at one point. Initially she felt she needed to care for her father.

Similarly, another participant felt it was her job to care for and protect her father, stating that he was the one abandoned and suffering. She acknowledged that he was also sometimes difficult and frustrating. He often made her feel like she was to blame. The participant stated that she did not have a relationship with her mother; she had been really let down by her because of HOW [emphasis added by participant] her mother handled the whole thing. She stated that she didn't really forgive her mother, and as a result had no respect for her. This participant directly stated her mother's responsibility for the divorce; her mom had found someone new.

The fourteen-year-old participant described a relationship with her father that was very close, in a healthy way. She felt that the two of them went through the divorce together. About her mother, she stated that she tolerated her; she loved her, but did not like her for a very long time. Their relationship was described by the participant as surface levelled (superficial); they rarely saw each other and did not have a relationship. She acknowledged that she knew her mother loved her, but she felt abandoned for a while, that her mother left her to fend for herself. The participant did state that she has now allowed her mother to resume her role as mom, since they have had the chance to talk about that time in their lives. Although not stated directly, this individual does indicate that she sees her mother as responsible for the divorce.

A participant who was nineteen at the time of parental separation described the paternal relationship as moving from resentment to something closer. There was no relationship with the mother. The parents were described as very loving and supportive individually, but horrible as a couple. Being placed in the middle of everything, this participant felt the need to give advice to the parents and play the protector.

Although the child/parent relationship is complex in every context, and cause and effect can not be assumed, the participants in this study have, to my understanding, aligned their perception of parental relationship with the outcome of divorce.

Findings

The data suggest that following a divorce some child/parent relationships are shattered or completely broken. Children may feel close to only one parent, or they may feel conflict with both parents. It would appear as if positive relationships are sometimes recreated with effort and forgiveness. If the child attributes responsibility for the divorce

to one parent, it may be the other parent who enjoys a positive child/parent relationship. In one case, a paternal relationship was so desired that described character flaws were overlooked. It does appear that when the child/mother relationship is shattered, the maternal relationship is described in harsh terms. There may be higher expectations of mothers and greater animosity when maternal abandonment is perceived.

Resident Parent and Parent/Child Relationships

The term custody was not included in the survey, so the phrase ‘resident parent’ was used in this analysis. I assumed that a child was closer to the resident parent, but the data were examined to test this assumption. A new *category* was created: resident parent. This category was compared to the previous category of parent/child relationships.

Of the participants who lived with their mothers, two described a closer relationship with the mother, one described a greater long-term admiration for the father, another participant did not describe a close relationship with either parent, while yet another described feeling close to both parents. The child who resided with the grandmother (mother’s mother) did not appear to have a close relationship with the mother and had no relationship with the father. The participant who lived with the mother for just the first year described a somewhat better initial relationship with the father. A participant who lived with his/her father described a closer relationship to the father, while another participant who lived with his/her father described not feeling particularly close to either parent, but preferred the father. One participant stated that he/she lived with the mother but the parents had joint custody; this child described a strained relationship with the mother and no relationship with father. The independent-

living participant described a relationship that was eventually closer to the father. It should be noted that both male participants remained with their mothers.

Findings

Based upon the data offered by this group of participants, it is suggested that when a child resides with the father, the relationship with the father sometimes appears to be close, but the relationship with the mother is not initially close. When a child resides with the mother, there may or may not be a close relationship with the mother. In this situation, relationships with the father may be close or absent.

Parental Behaviours Negative in Nature

The participants noted parental behaviours which were not beneficial. The *category* was: specific parental behaviours negative in nature.

Remarks that indicated negative behaviours included the following.

- parental morality changed; they did not communicate (parent to parent)
- my mother... was promiscuous; my mother was emotionally and verbally abusive to me
- (mother was) finished raising her children when she left; they put me in the middle of everything... felt like the middle man
- (father) often made me feel like I was to blame
- dad's lifestyle was not appropriate
- it was like a competition to see who could get our love, my dad's strategy was to use money

Beneficial Parental Behaviours

The participants sometimes mentioned beneficial parental behaviours. The *category* was: beneficial parental behaviours.

Incidents of positive parenting behaviour included the following.

- the separation was talked about...prior, mostly by our mother
- they said it was not our fault
- I was given the choice as to when and how often I wanted to visit my dad... I felt like I had some control in my life
- parents always gave their opinion and then left us to decide... I liked that
- I always, always, knew that I was loved... even when I felt abandoned for a while
- individually parents were very loving and supportive... the older I get, the more I realize that I would model a lot of their parenting skills, it's their marital skills I avoid
- I now realize that parenting is probably THE [emphasis added by participant] single hardest thing you will ever do and I commend their efforts
- father... made strong efforts to keep the family together by investing in a summer cottage... he loved taking me around to construction sites and allowed me special privileges
- she tried very hard to be a good single parent

Past Relationships and Desired Relationships

I moved from family relationships to romantic relationships, first questioning how the participants perceived their past and present adult relationships. Only one participant

reported still being single. A category was created to examine the words used by the participants to describe their past relationships. The *category* was: past relationships.

Words and phrases offered by the participants to describe past relationships included the following.

- poor... because I aimed to fulfill self
- very competitive... treated other males like my brother (with conflict)
- head over heels in like... I was fascinated
- craved male attention
- avoided... commitment
- (a past) long-term relationship... didn't bring out the best, or even really the good in each other... frustrated, angry, trapped... ended it
- had many relationships before marriage and none were romantic
- rough
- initial relationships were to fill a deep void in my own soul

A category was created to examine the participants' suggestions on what a perfect romantic relationship could look like. The *category* was: desired romantic relationships. This category was compared to the *category*: present age of participant. Where applicable, the participant's attitude of attaining their desired relationship is presented in parenthesis. The *category* was: expectation of desired relationship.

Participants over the age of forty offered some of the following comments about what they desire in romantic relationships.

- both people putting the other one first... putting self aside to please the other (medium to high expectation of attaining)

- honesty, communication, trust, accepting the person for who they are
- finding someone you can love and respect and they can love and respect you
(found it)
- my husband would love to see my answer... I love every effort he puts into it...
both husband and wife seek ways to meet each others needs and beyond (the
highest expectation)
- mutual love and care... similar values and desires for the future... respect for one
another... biblical values... both parties support each other and desire to see the
other become all they were meant to be

Comments offered by participants who are presently under forty years of age
included the following.

- good communication, loving, trusting, devoted, interested in one another's
hobbies (expect to work... until we can achieve)
- commitment and compromise
- passion for life
- communication, laughter, and mutual respect (no expectations... never be
perfect... everyday work at what we think needs to be dealt with);
- close, committed, friends, shared dreams (very high)
- caring, soft, loving, perfect (with work and attention anyone can attain my self
described romantic relationship, especially me)

One participant in this age group cited that perfection is so ideal... but in a perfect
world (relationships would include)... mutual respect, no arguing, always

understanding what the other wants, need and means... always feeling loved and knowing that your partner feels the same way. This participant further stated- I've also learned that love is a CHOICE... I must be conscious in my efforts to let my husband know that I love him because my definition of love and his are two very different things.

Findings

It appeared from the reflections of the respondents that early romantic relationships were neither satisfying nor fulfilling. The comments made concerning adult relationships were very insightful. Based on the reflections of this group it would appear that many individuals who have experienced parental divorce have given conscious consideration to the factors associated with a successful adult relationship.

Advice from Participants to Other Children of Divorce

The individuals who participated in this research study agreed to share feelings and events of their private lives that may have been held in secret for many years. I am extremely grateful to each one. They have also offered words of advice to others.

Their offerings include the follows.

- Know that you are not to blame for your parents' divorce.
- Keep the walls down and communication open between both of your parents.
- Remember that your parents are human too, and they can only fix what they know is broken, TELL THEM.
- You need to be able to voice your hurt.
- Communicate your feelings to your parents or to some adult you trust.

- Know that your feelings are important. Know that you are important and valuable as a person. Know that God has provided other sources of love and encouragement for you.
- Find some caring and mature adults who you can talk to that will be objective and supportive.
- Use the positive and change the negative.
- It's okay to be angry... it's okay to hurt... it's okay to cry... it's okay to be vulnerable and weak and not have all the answers... we're all dealt crappy cards at some point in our lives, your choice (and yes it's a choice) is how are you going to play the cards you are dealt... no matter what you're going through, for your own benefit, you need to strive to MAKE a better life for yourselves DESPITE the circumstances.
- Be a regular part of a church community.
- Find a listening party, someone with wisdom.
- Hang in there because God can turn an awful thing into something great.
- Before getting into a relationship, know what you want and don't want. Don't be afraid you'll never find anyone... don't settle.
- Pray, Pray, Pray.
- Find a partner you can communicate with, really be able to talk about your feeling with—open up your feeling to—someone who cares to get to know who you really are.
- Relationships don't fix problems... marriage does not make bad things go away.
- You need to forgive in order to move on and be free of any anger.

- It does get better and there is hope at the end. Sometimes the valleys we walk through shape us into the most beautiful people we can be.
- Unforgiveness will stop you from becoming who God created you to become.
- You're probably not over it... you're likely still affected by it and being shaped by it... let healing come when it does.

CHAPTER FIVE

Research Discussion and Conclusion

Overview of Intention

This thesis explored the immediate and long-term impact that parental divorce can have on children. It investigated relevant literature identifying predictive and protective variables examined by theorists and authors, from various disciplines with a variety of perspectives, and it explored the reflective experiences of individuals generating statements from the words of research participants whose lives have been affected by parental divorce.

The three research questions which directed the study were addressed. Possible immediate and long-term outcomes of parental divorce were reported, reflective experiences of adult children of divorced couples were explored, and a synthesis of knowledge presented that may be useful to program planners and evaluators interested in improving the content of educational programs focused on the needs of children of divorce. Educators, through this thesis, will be informed of the impact that divorce may have on children, of possible factors contributing to resiliency in children of divorce, and of possible intervention efforts.

This thesis demonstrated to educators that divorce education is an important issue that demands their attention, and it presented the major concerns to be addressed in various divorce education programs. This thesis was a pilot study to stimulate educators to further investigation and development of programs.

Overview of Findings from Survey and Literature Review

This section brings together the statements drawn from the reflective experiences of research participants and the major themes explored in the literature review. A comparison of the major results revealed in these two complementary investigations will further illuminate the central concerns that should be included in relevant and meaningful educational programs as they pertain to divorce education.

The original research undertaken in this thesis was influenced by the literature review. The academic and journalistic investigations accomplished by Ahrons (2004) and Staal (2000) were rough models for this research on reflective experience. Although the authors did include quotes from children of divorce, their focus appeared to be observation of children of divorce and personal experience. The present research focused upon the words of the participants. What do children of divorce have to say about their experience?

Emotional and Behavioural Outcomes

The literature review offered insight from various authors and researchers on the diversity of emotional and behavioural responses at various developmental stages. Piaget's cognitive-stage theory suggested the limitations that young children have in understanding the actions and behaviours of the adults around them (Miller, 2002). Pagani et al. (1997) suggested that children exhibit more behavioural disturbances during their early school years when parental divorce occurs before children are six years of age. Zill et al (1993) found similar evidence. Although life can become easier for parents when children begin school, the broadening environment can create a problem with family identity (Anderson, 1999). In their meta-analysis of 92 studies, Amato and Keith

(1991) looked specifically at the well-being of children of divorce and found that these children did appear to have lower states of well-being. A number of studies explored the effect of divorce on externalized and internalized behavioural problems in adolescents, and most found a correlation between these two factors (Fergusson et al., 1994).

The survey findings of this thesis indicated that children of all ages responded to parental divorce with sadness and confusion. The survey data also suggested that, although behavioural and emotional response varied, at some point following the separation of their parents, most children responded negatively, sometimes both emotionally and behaviourally.

The descriptions of emotions and behaviours offered by the participants were compelling and direct. Personal accounts of what individuals wished others had known about their emotional and behavioural states offered convincing insight into the impact of parental divorce. The reflective accounts of the participants did not indicate significant diversity according to age, except perhaps, an increase in negative behaviour during the later teen years. The literature review offered a broader understanding on what to expect at various life stages.

The participants repeatedly indicated that parents and those outside the immediate family did not know what they were feeling or why they were behaving as they were. One participant stated that children should tell their parents how they feel because the parents do not know. But why should this task fall to the children? The literature on developmental stages suggested that younger children are not able to determine and articulate their feelings and behaviours. One older participant indicated that she attempted to relate her feelings, only to have her feelings dismissed. Clearly, parents,

grandparents, community workers, and educators have the responsibility to be educated on the possible emotional and behavioural outcomes of parental divorce, so that they may be equipped to guide children through the transitions of parental divorce.

The Alberta *Parenting after Separation* program, which was briefly examined in the literature review, did include information on the possible emotional and behavioural outcomes of parental divorce. Although a psychologist did present this important information during the workshop, it was one section of an eight section/six hour workshop. At most, this brief presentation would introduce parents to the possibility of behavioural or emotional responses in their children, which is far better than no educational attempt. Interaction, discussion, and questions were not an aspect of this particular workshop session. (As I recall, the participant parents asked question during the session on child support.) This program did not appear to include transfer-of learning strategies. An educational program that appropriately addresses the possible outcomes of parental divorce should expose the learner to information and the opportunity to respond to that information. This would mean small groups and lengthy focus on the primary subject, which in this case would be emotional and behavioural outcomes. The variety of information presented in this workshop and the brief period of time allotted to the workshop would suggest an insufficient learning experience.

Since my attendance at this mandated program I have been made aware of a follow-up program which focuses on communication. This program is voluntary, longer in duration, and smaller in participant numbers.

Social and Economic Outcomes

The literature review described the impact that divorce may have on the economic status of children and the possible compromise of education. The research of Ozawa and Yoon (2003) indicated that six months previous and six months following marriage disruption, children are found to be worse off economically; the children in their study drastically lost economic ground in the divorce process. According to South et al. (1998) parental divorce increases the likelihood that children will move out of their familial neighbourhood. Wainrib and Bloch (1998) stated that each loss due to moving may contribute to a child's cumulative losses, increasing their vulnerability to trauma. Zill et al. found that 25% of surveyed participants had dropped out of high school.

Although not asked directly about their post-separation financial situations, at least one participant stated that she was unable to participate in desired athletic endeavours because of financial pressure. This participant did feel that the financial compromise was very detrimental to her emotional well-being. Another participant had difficulties associated with mobility, while yet another noted the struggle of seeing family members separated following the divorce. All the participants in this study eventually completed their high school education; eight of the eleven participants have acquired some post-secondary education. But again, the participants were hand-picked and therefore do not represent the entire population. The results may differ from those of other researchers.

The social-psychology theories briefly presented in the literature review offer 'possibilities of concern' that should be noted by developers of educational programming. As Bandura et al. (2001) suggest some children may not have developed a sufficient

academic self-belief. Or, as Zimbardo and Leippe (1991) suggest, perceived rejection may have left a child with a low sense of social affiliation. Children and adult children of divorce may come to a learning experience with a diminished focus to learn. Educators who prepare programs directly for these groups should be aware of this possibility and incorporate strategies to overcome these psychosocial decrements, offering greater motivation to learn.

Long-term Outcomes

The literature review offered two perspectives of long-term outcomes of parental divorce. Ahrons (2004) is a sociologist who experienced a divorce in her personal life. Staal (2000) is a journalist whose parents divorced when she was fourteen. Ahrons stated that “for the great majority of children who experience a parental divorce, the divorce becomes part of their history but it is not a defining factor” (p. 11). Staal (2000) stated that for many children of divorce “the past walks alongside the present” (p. 2). The divorce of her parents was not simply a factor from her past but it had begun to “infect” (Staal, 2000, p. 17) her future. Along with a fear of intimacy, Staal suggested that children may develop a fear of feeling. Staal also suggested that children of divorce may have difficulty trusting the love of others and trusting their own love. Amato and Keith (1991) did not find absolute consistency in the literature concerning long-term effects of divorce on adult well-being, but following their meta-analysis of 37 studies, the authors concluded that “the argument that parental divorce presents few problems for children’s long-term development is simply inconsistent with the literature on this topic” (p. 54).

Various statements offered by the participants of this thesis research also suggested difficult transitions into satisfying adult relationships. One participant

indicated a previous divorce, another noted a relationship that was not well suited, and yet another stated that early relationships were undertaken to fill a void. The only participant currently single stated that she continues to avoid commitment, and that she is afraid of not loving a partner enough or of always finding something wrong with him. She admitted that she still may be somewhat fearful of marriage. Although the participants were not directed to discuss the sources of their fears, most indicated a fear level over one (on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being high). Four participants indicated a fear level at three or more, and four participants indicated an anxiety level of three or higher.

The findings from both the literature review and the research study certainly indicate a need for concern about long-term outcomes. I would suggest that few individuals would take these relationship anomalies to a family therapist, but that they may be motivated to address issues through educational interventions. Although individuals may admit that they have difficulty in particular areas, such as building healthy relationships, citing a dysfunction urgent enough to initiate therapy would likely be seen as too extreme. The experience of parental divorce may be seen as a type of 'red flag' for educational intervention prior to involvement in long-term/committed relationships.

As noted in the introduction of this thesis, educators have not necessarily seen themselves as a vital source of intervention in addressing the emotional well-being of individuals. But the assumption was made that education can promote introspection and eventual changes in behaviour and emotional well-being. Educational programs that prepare individuals for academic endeavours, work experiences, healthy adult

relationships, and marriage may include introspection and reflection that may alter harmful behaviours and inferior emotional well-being. Students attending public schools and post-secondary institutions may be an educational population ready to address problems of well-being. Public schools should consider further development of non-academic programs that help children address emotional problems. I might suggest that post-secondary students sometimes register for academic courses in psychology and sociology in hope of coming to terms with their self-perceived, emotional dysfunctions. Non-academic (non-credit) programs that address emotional problems accumulated during childhood should be available to post-secondary students. Post-secondary educational institutions may also consider integrating into their psychology and sociology courses opportunities for students to explore issues of well-being and reflection.

Resilience, Parental Behaviour, and Intervention

The literature review presented information on resiliency as a protective variable in understanding the outcomes of parental divorce. Ahrons (2004) defined resilience as “the ability to bounce back from adversity, to face a crisis with the resources to adapt” (p. 194). She contends that resilience is not an extraordinary trait, but that everyone has the capacity to be resilient; it is something that can be taught.

Along with relatives, siblings, peers, and other non-familial adults, parents contribute to a child’s adjustment and sense of well-being (Grych & Fincham, 1997). Sandler et al. (1997) suggested that social support may mitigate the debilitating effects of stress. Research also suggests that grandparent involvement can be an intervening factor in the building of resilience in children following parental divorce (Lussier, Deater-Deckard, Dunn, & Davies, 2002).

In their reflective accounts, the participants did recall behaviours they used to compensate for the break-up of their family units. It was stated that children did search out ways to make life happy or to detach themselves from family problems, though not all efforts and strategies were successful. Most participants could recall particular individuals or groups that made a difference. One participant acknowledged the positive input of her grandmother; others mentioned aunts or friends. Of interventions offered by educators, one participant noted that her teachers were concerned about possible depression and another mentioned help from bible college instructors. At least three participants noted that school activities, such as soccer, temporarily redirected behaviours and emotions. The research data indicated that children valued positive intervention that was compassionate and caring.

Educational programs should be available to child educators and workers that they may be able to identify stress and aid children in coping with stress. Child educators and workers should learn how to provide an environment that children may be comfortable in accessing support and resources. Certainly, programs offered to parents considering divorce should include material on positive behaviours as well as good parenting skills. Both parents should attend parenting classes prior to child involvement in the separation process. I would suggest that all parents, divorced or not divorced, may improve the quality of their own lives and the lives of their children if knowledge of parenting skills were gained and incorporated into their behaviours. But within the context of divorce, parenting may take on new and diverse appearances. For example, fathers may need to learn how to “distance parent”, or mothers may need to learn how to

play the role of both father and mother, or as one participant indicated, her father had to learn to become two parents.

Wright and Masten (2005) offer a number of personal characteristics that may cause an individual to be resilient. Future research may investigate the possibility that children can be taught to have a positive outlook on life, and a positive view of themselves, to have faith and a sense of meaning in life. Programming should be produced for child educators and parents that they may teach children these skills at an early age.

The literature review has identified behaviours that could emotionally harm children. The participants verified this assertion by recalling interactions between parents that caused them anxiety and support from others that they values.

Outcomes for Family Relations

The literature review offered a discussion concerning the diverse characteristics of parent/child relationships. Arditti (1999) pointed out that relationships between children and parents are diverse and fluid in nature; and divorce may bring about a transformation in the quality of relationships. Arditti agreed with research indicating that divorce decreases the social distance between mothers and children, and that boundaries are more open; the hierarchy of power may disappear. Divorce may prompt the emergence of a 'best friend' status for girls. Koerner et al. (2002) suggested that adolescent girls may experience greater psychological distress when exposed to sensitive material such as the mother's personal concerns and negativity toward the father. Bowen suggested that an emotionally mature individual, in this case a mother, does not "route their anxiety through another person" (Gilbert, 1992, p. 14). Mayseless et al. (2004) examined the

issue of role reversal, which can develop when “families are unable to maintain hierarchical generational boundaries in which parents guide and nurture their children and children seek comfort and advice from their parents” (p. 78). Role reversal can be problematic when development is interrupted, or when children are not acknowledged and valued (Mayseless et al., 2004). King (2002) discussed trust as it is developed within parent/child relationships, stating that trust is essential for healthy relationships. Early experiences, like divorce, may affect an individual’s ability to trust others. Divorce may bring a decrease in the quality, quantity, and timing of interaction between children and parents, which could affect the trust level of children. Clarke-Stewart et al. (2000) presented attachment style as one factor affecting positive or negative psychological adjustment in very young children following a divorce.

The literature review offered insight into the possible backgrounds to the relationship problems exposed by the participants of this research study. The reflective discussions of the participants revealed a significant amount of information concerning parental relationships. It would appear that of all the possible outcomes of parental divorce, the most significant and sometimes enduring impact may be on the parent/child relationship. Some participants described broken or non-existent relationships with parents following separation. One participant stated that she tolerated her mother, that she loved her but did not like her for a very long time. Another participant described a bond of survival that developed between her and her father. Others described relationships that survived because the participant had forgiven, or overlooked, past parental behaviours.

One major motivation for attending parenting programs may be the hope of avoiding the pain of broken or ruptured relationships. A parent's first step may be an understanding of the possible emotional and behavioural outcomes a child may experience, the possible social and economic hardships that may challenge them, the dynamics of good relationships, the most effective parenting behaviours, the least destructive parental interactions, and the opportunities for resilience development. But knowing the issues is just the first step. Individuals must act on the knowledge gained. By understanding the knowledge and applying that learning, parents have the greatest possibility of maintaining good relationships with their children.

The knowledge gained from the literature review undertaken in this thesis has been corroborated by the reflective experiences of the participants in the research study. The body of knowledge assembled offers a base upon which various educational programming may be developed.

The Benefits of Findings to Educational Efforts

This thesis has introduced and explored numerous topics, which could be included in divorce education programming. This section briefly offers some suggestions of educational environments and groups that might benefit from the knowledge collected in this investigation.

As previously stated, the primary target population in need of programming is parents who are considering divorce, who are in the process of divorce, or who have divorced in the past. This thesis has stated that a number of parenting programs are presently in use. The knowledge compiled in this thesis may be used by educators to evaluate these programs.

I would suggest that parents who are only just considering separation are most reluctant to participate in divorce education. Parents should be offered an educational environment where they can feel comfortable investigating the effect that their future decisions will have on their children. It would also be advisable that parents be encouraged to over-come discomforts concerning their past divorces, that they become knowledgeable about how to recreate or revitalize their relationships with their children. Based upon the information provided by the participants I would suggest that parents may not be aware of the attitudes their children have toward them. Although programs may be available for this parenting population, I have not encountered educational programming developed primarily for parents contemplating divorce, or for parents who have divorced in the past and want to focus on revitalizing relationships.

Another target for divorce education is divorced individuals in general. I would suggest that information in this thesis could be useful to educators in the development of programs directed towards meeting the needs of all individuals who have experienced divorce. Many of the issues presented in the context of children may also apply to divorcing individuals: abandonment, depression, negative emotions and behaviours, mobility disruptions, financial deprivation, problems with later adult relationships, lack of forgiveness, and poor resilience. Divorce education may be used to empower divorced individuals to successfully move forward.

Of course, the children of divorce are a potential target population. Educators should be motivated to produce programs that address the issues of adult relationships so that adult children of divorce may be empowered to enjoy healthy relationships. I would suggest that programs for young adults or emerging adults should incorporate elements of

reflection, evaluation, and forgiveness. A number of the individuals who participated in this research study clearly indicated that forgiveness is a necessary climax in the reflection of the experience of parental divorce. Likewise, younger children and teens need appropriate education to aid them through the transitions of divorce, as well as an educational context that discusses and validates their feelings.

Another target population is the extended family. I would suggest that, of all members of an extended family, grandparents have the greatest potential for loss following a divorce. For this reason grandparenting interventions were included within the literature review of this thesis. This may be a population ready and motivated to intervene in a positive way. Again, to my knowledge, grand-parenting programs have not been developed.

Child educators are a potential target population. Do educators within the school system have the knowledge to address the needs of their students? Have school authorities incorporated methods of identifying children who are experiencing parental divorce? The participants in this research did not offer evidence of positive intervention from educators. In addition to educators, populations that would benefit from divorce education include community workers, church workers, lawyers, and divorce arbitrators.

As previously stated, knowledge alone does not produce change. Program developers must incorporate teaching techniques that encourage individuals to use what they have learned. This may be one challenge to the authors of the parenting program examined in this thesis. Did transfer of learning occur? Were the parents able and motivated to apply what they learned? (Caffarella, 2002) This thesis has not investigated

techniques to encourage transfer of learning, but excellent educational programming must incorporate these techniques.

One intention of this thesis was to demonstrate to educators that addressing the needs of children of divorce is a worthy and needed task. I would suggest that the literature review and the words of the participants have offered evidence that this issue is significant.

Research Suggestions

This has been an exploratory study; a pilot study to encourage further investigation into this subject.

Researchers from the disciplines of psychology and sociology have generated significant data on the outcomes of parental divorce; however, some areas that could warrant further investigation include long-term outcomes, resilience factors, transfer-of-learning methods, and motivation strategies. I suggest that researchers with an education background should become involved in this area of research because they bring with them teaching techniques and methods, such as transfer-of-learning strategies, not generally available to branches of learning such as psychology, sociology, and family therapy. Professionals in all disciplines should be encouraged to be collaborative in their efforts to address the problems encountered by children of divorce. Educational researchers should access studies on emotional well-being and parenting techniques submitted by psychology experts, that they may transmit this knowledge to educational populations while incorporating techniques to motivate learning and to transfer learning into practical application. Education can move beyond psychology. The education of adults is not just the transfer of knowledge but a communication of the ability to use that

knowledge. Psychology can investigate long-term outcomes, but education can equip adults to use learned knowledge. Family therapists can aid individuals in their pursuit of emotional well-being, but educators can reach the masses. I suggest that the Alberta *Parenting after Separation* program presents significant and vital information to parents, but the program may not successfully equip parents to apply that information.

Studies are needed to determine the most effective ways to encourage individuals to participate in educational programs that address the emotional and behavioural well-being of their children, and of themselves. New motivation strategies need to be developed for such target groups as divorcing parents. Researchers may investigate methods of educating parents in a non-threatening context. The research accomplished in this thesis focused upon the experience of adult children of divorce; future research may pursue this issue from the perspective of the parents. Future researchers may determine if some educational programs are better attended than others and what dynamics make particular programs more successful?

Further inquiry is needed to understand various long-term outcomes. How can young adults, who have experienced such emotions as abandonment, prepare for healthy adult relationships? How can parents and society encourage these young men and women to look to their future with excitement and enthusiasm? A better understanding of their unique emotional well-being and behavioural patterns would aid in the development of effective approaches to these personal issues. Further attention should be given to emerging adulthood. Researchers should ask themselves if this developmental group has particular distinctions that may influence how they deal with the past experience of parental divorce.

Case studies of visibly successful and unsuccessful resiliency efforts would contribute to our understanding of the specific factors that make a difference in sustaining personal well-being. Such studies may also offer a better understanding of individual differences in coping. Why are some young people able to draw on the difficulties they encountered in childhood and use that learning to flourish in life?

Methods of data collection vary in all research studies. At times throughout this research project, I questioned my original decision to obtain data by means of a self-administered survey instrument, rather than with face to face interviews. But having completed the analysis of the data, I maintain that the choice of a survey instrument was correct in this context. I received very intimate answers to the questions asked in the survey, most likely more intimate than if the questions had been asked in person. Also, participants were not asked for an immediate response; they were allowed the advantage of time to consider their feelings and to recall specific incidents from their past. One participant asked for assistance in answering the survey, which involved my asking the questions, recording the answers, and reading back the answers for verification. Retrospective thought was not as evident in this survey. As I initially hoped, participants appeared to spend a significant amount of time working through their thoughts to arrive at the answers they offered. I asked three participants about the process of answering the questionnaire and learned that it was a difficult but beneficial process. The participants appeared pleased to have completed this task.

Although finding a willing population to complete a questionnaire of this depth was a difficult task, I would suggest that the answers obtained were worth the work and the wait.

Concluding Thoughts

The primary implication for educators, as identified in this thesis, is simply the importance of this issue. The words of those who have experienced parental divorce urge educators to pay attention to this problem.

Educational programs that address the well-being of individuals are, in essence, a preventative effort. Can education protect young children from distress? Can education prevent teens from resorting to risky behaviours? Can education keep young adults from the discouragement of aimless drifting? Can education reduce the risk of broken relationships?

Perhaps education that addresses the well-being of individuals should be brought into the mainstream of education. Publicly funded programs, with relevant and meaningful material, should be accessible within the context of educational facilities and workplaces, and participation in programs should be encouraged by educators and employers.

I will give the participants of my research study the privilege of offering the final words.

- You're probably not over it. You're likely still affected by it and being shaped by it.
- You need to forgive in order to move on and be free of any anger.
- Often we block things out, and allow that forgotten pain to create anger and bitterness that we may not even know exists.
- Forgiveness is critical especially when people have failed us.

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APPENDIX

Survey Questionnaire

Instructions

Participants must be 21 years of age or older, who experienced parental divorce before the age of 18.

Please answer the following questions. You may choose to do this:

1. electronically (just copy the questionnaire to Microsoft Word and type answers to questions)
2. print the questionnaire and answer in pen
3. answer the questionnaire mailed to you.

This is voluntary participation; you may omit any question that you do not feel comfortable answering. The questionnaire should take between 20 and 30 minutes to complete.

Questionnaire

1a. What is your gender?

1b. Current age? (check the closest that applies)

- ☐ 21 to 29
- ☐ 30 to 35
- ☐ 36 to 40
- ☐ over 40

1c. Relationship (marital) status?

2. What level of education have you attained? (Please check the highest that applies)

- ☐ did not finish high school
- ☐ completed high school
- ☐ some post secondary education
- ☐ university degree
- ☐ university post-graduate degree
- ☐ Other (please be specific)

3. What is your current occupation?

4. What was your age when your parents separated?

5. Using one to ten descriptive words, how would you describe the day you realized that your parents planned to separate?
6. How do you think your parents could have prepared you for this event?
7. What was your immediate response (physical, emotional, and behavioural) to your parents' separation?
8. How would you describe your behaviour and emotional well-being in the years following your parents' separation and divorce?
9. In whose residence did you reside following the separation; what was your perception of this living arrangement?
10. How would you describe your relationship with your mother immediately following the separation and four years later?
11. How would you describe your relationship with your father immediately following the separation and four years later?
12. What was your childhood perception of the parenting skills and techniques used by your parents and has that perception changed?
13. What would you have liked your parents to have known about you and your emotions during the early years of their divorce?
14. How, if at all, did your extended family (e.g.: grandparents, aunts, uncles) help you following the separation?
15. How, if at all, did your community (e.g.: neighbours, teachers, school, sporting groups, churches) help you following the separation?
16. How could your extended family and community have better helped you during this period of your life?

17. In one to four sentences, what advice would you give a child or a teen-ager who is presently experiencing parental divorce?
18. In one to four sentences, describe what you learned about romantic relationships from your parents?
19. In one to six sentences, describe what you learned about romantic relationships from your extended family, and from your community?
20. What descriptive words would you use to describe the perfect romantic relationship?
21. What is your expectation level of attaining your 'self-described' perfect romantic relationship?
22. What words would you use to describe your romantic relationships in the past; and if applicable, to describe your present romantic relationship?
23. How do you feel after an argument or disagreement with your romantic partner (past or present relationships); what have you done (past or present) in response to arguments; and what have you done (past or present) to avoid quarrels?
24. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being high, how would you rate the following (Please circle the most appropriate number on the scale as of today):
- Your current level of happiness: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Your current level of anxiety: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Your current level of anger: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Your current level of fear: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
25. In one to four sentences, what advice would you give another adult who experienced parental divorce as a child?

Instructions for submission

Please e-mail the completed questionnaire to terry.thulien@shaw.ca. If you filled this questionnaire out in pen, please mail the completed questionnaire to Terry Thulien, 10 Laird Close, Red Deer, Alberta, T4R 3K2.

Please remember that return of the questionnaire will constitute consent and permission for inclusion in the research study.

CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Divorce Education: An Alternative for Family Therapy

Researcher and Institutional Affiliation: Terry Thulien, University of Saskatchewan, College of Graduate Studies.

Purpose and Possible Benefits of the Study: The purpose of the study is to compile a body of knowledge which will inform educators of the possible immediate and long-term outcomes that divorce may have on the children of divorced couples. This body of knowledge may be used by educators to develop or evaluate educational programs that are illuminated by both theory and reflective experience, to aid individuals whose lives have been impacted by parental divorce.

Voluntary Participation: Participation is voluntary. Participants may omit any question that they do not feel comfortable in answering, or withdraw from the study at any time.

Procedure: Participants will answer the questions in the questionnaire, which should take approximately twenty to thirty minutes to complete. Participants have three options:

- answer the questionnaire on the e-mail attachment and return the completed questionnaire as an e-mail attachment.
- print the questionnaire, answer the questionnaire in ink and return the results by postal mail.
- answer the printed version received in the mail and return it by postal mail.

Review the instructions on the questionnaire on how to proceed and how to return the questionnaire to the researcher.

All participants (e-mail and mail respondents) should keep a copy of the Consent Form for their personal records.

Confidentiality: E-mail responses will be opened at the researcher's home office. Attachments will be copied to the researcher's Microsoft Word hard drive, with copies made on auxiliary disks. E-mails from respondents will be deleted. Questionnaire answers received through the mail will be copied verbatim onto Microsoft Word and stored with the electronic answers. All identifying information will be destroyed once the need for it has passed. Original questionnaires will be retained by the research supervisor, with the auxiliary disks, for a minimum of five years. To insure confidentiality do not record your name or address on the questionnaire. A separate list of names, e-mail addresses, and optional mailing addresses will be retained by the research supervisor.

Reporting of Data: The answers from the questionnaire (in all of its forms) will be considered the research data. This data will be analyzed by applying a modified form of grounded theory and the results will be reported in the researcher's thesis. Direct quotes will be taken from the anonymous questionnaires; most of the results will be reported in anonymous aggregate form. The researcher will insure the exclusion of any direct quotes

that may identify the participants or any other third party. A computer disk of data will be stored by the research supervisor for a minimum of 5 years after the study.

Risks: The researcher does not foresee any risks or side effects. If participants wish to report anxiety during or after the questionnaire, please e-mail the researcher immediately. If anxiety is suffered, participants may be directed to a counselling service provider, such as Shalom Counselling Services, 403-346-6692. Any counselling costs will be the responsibility of the participants.

Behavioural Research Ethics Board, University of Saskatchewan: Any questions regarding the ethics of the study may be directed to the Ethics Office.

Completion and return of the questionnaire will constitute consent and permission for the researcher to use the data gathered in the survey.

Proposed research was reviewed and approved on ethical grounds by the U of S Behavioural Research Ethics Board.

Sample Recruitment Advertisement (bulletin board)

Are you an adult who experienced parental divorce as a child?

I would greatly appreciate your participation in a University of Saskatchewan graduate student research survey which focuses on the experience of individuals whose parents divorced.

Your participation in this research study will involve answering a few questions, in the privacy of your own home.

Participants need only answer those questions that they are comfortable in answering. All questionnaire answers are confidential.

Volunteers must be 21 years of age or over, who experienced parental separation before the age of 18.

Your contribution will enlarge the body of knowledge about this social issue, so that present and future generations may benefit from educational programs that are illuminated by both theory and the reflective experience of individuals whose lives have been impacted by parental divorce.

For more information regarding confidentiality, ethical consent, or to receive the questionnaire (by e-mail or by post), contact Terry at 403-309-3889 or e-mail terry.thulien@shaw.ca.

Sample Recruitment Advertisement

Are you an adult who experienced parental divorce as a child?

Your participation in a University of Saskatchewan graduate student research survey could benefit other children and adults.

For more information regarding confidentiality or ethical consent contact Terry at 403-309-3889 or terry.thulien@shaw.ca.

Those individuals asking for information will be sent: the Consent Form, the Questionnaire, and instructions for completion and submission of the questionnaire.